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## ASSESSING THE RCAF MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

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**Master of Defence Studies**

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**PCEMI 39 AD**

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES  
JCSP 39 DL – PCEMI 39 AD

MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES – MAÎTRISE EN ÉTUDES DE LA DÉFENSE

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15 August 2014

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	iii
MENTORSHIP IN THE RCAF.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Mentorship Defined .....	7
RCAF Mentorship Program.....	8
CORE ASPECTS OF MENTORING.....	11
Functions and Outcomes Associated with Mentoring .....	11
The Benefits of Mentoring.....	12
Mentorship Benefits for the Organization .....	12
Benefits for the Mentee.....	16
Benefits for the Mentor .....	20
Potential Negative Aspects of Mentoring .....	23
Sponsorship.....	24
Elitism .....	25
Mentor Neglect .....	26
Informal Models of Mentorship Programs .....	28
Formal Model of Mentorship Programs .....	31
Formal Versus Informal Considerations for the RCAF.....	33
Obstacles to Effective Mentoring .....	34
Unsuccessful Matching of Mentors and Mentees .....	35
Mentor Shortage.....	40
MENTORING IN THE MILITARY PROFESSION .....	42
The Royal Canadian Navy and Mentorship.....	43
The US Army Mentorship Program.....	45
The USAF Mentoring Program .....	50
The RAF Mentoring Scheme .....	54
The United States Marine Corps Mentorship Program (MCMP).....	57
Lessons Learned from Military Mentorship Programs .....	61
ADDITIONAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS.....	64
Mentor Selection.....	64
Cultural and Gender Considerations .....	68
Cultural Considerations .....	69
Gender.....	71
Mentor Preparation and Training.....	75
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	78
CONCLUSION.....	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	86

## ABSTRACT

Approximately 70 percent of The Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) senior members will have 25-30 years of service within the next five years.<sup>1</sup> This attrition will result in a significant knowledge drain with fewer experienced individuals to develop tomorrow's leaders. The RCAF has developed an informal mentorship program to mitigate the anticipated knowledge loss.

Mentorship has been shown to increase commitment and retention while knowledge transfer from mentor to mentee can address knowledge loss. However, organizational mentorship programs are often designed with little consideration as to how to maximize effectiveness. This paper examined mentorship theory and existing programs to determine if the RCAF Mentorship program will meet its stated objectives and concluded that it will fall short of its stated aims without additional structure to establish a clear link to organizational objectives. A training program, supported by a RCAF-specific guidebook, will clearly define participants' roles and responsibilities and will foster the required mentoring skills and strategies. Finally, the RCAF needs to facilitate mentor-mentee matching to enable mentees to select compatible mentors. The RCAF Mentorship Program is in its infancy and so further development is likely; with additional structure, the probability of it meeting its objectives will be significantly enhanced.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, senior members are defined as Lieutenant-Colonels and above for Officers and Master Warrant Officers and above for NCMs. Estimates are based on 2013 Annual Military Occupation Review (AMOR) for RCAF occupations. Members with 25-30 years of service are entering a very attractive retirement window as they are very close to maximizing their pension.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFM	United States Air Force Manual
AFPD	United States Air Force Policy Directive
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CCTS	Commander's Combined Training Session
DL	Distance Learning
HCC	Honor Courage Commitment
HR	Human Resources
IR	Imposed Restriction
JCSP	Joint Command Staff Program
MCMP	Marine Corps Mentoring Program
MyDP	My Development Program
NCM	Non-Commissioned Member
O&M	Operations and Maintenance Costs
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RUCTOP	RCAF Unit Command Team Orientation Program
SOA	Senior Occupation Advisor
USAF	United States Air Force
US Army	United States Army
USMC	United States Marine Corps
YFR	Yearly Flying Rate

## MENTORSHIP IN THE RCAF

### Introduction

*The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Mentorship Programme is designed to develop a means to enhance relationships. Its person-to-person approach ensures professionalism, critical thinking and that ethical decisions are always made. Through this programme, our more senior, experienced personnel have a responsibility to pass on the knowledge, insight and wisdom they have gained throughout their careers, and less experienced personnel of the RCAF have a responsibility to seek out and accept the benefits their colleagues offer them.*

*I fully support this vital new Mentorship Programme. It really is a “runway to success,” and will bring tremendous benefits to our airmen and airwomen—of all ranks—throughout the organization. I encourage you to learn more and to take advantage of the vast experience and knowledge that the people around you possess. The success of the RCAF is in the knowledge and leadership of our people.*

- Lieutenant-General Yvan Blondin, Commander of the RCAF, *Royal Canadian Air Force Mentorship Programme “Runway To Success”*

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is facing a challenging demographic shift. Within the next five years, approximately 70 percent of the CAF’s senior leadership will enter a very attractive retirement window having 30-35 years of service.<sup>2</sup> Hence, there is a very real risk that the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) will lose a significant portion of its most experienced leaders in the near-term. The CAF may also need to rethink its perceptions regarding retention. There is a belief that the current generation is not in search of lengthy careers with a single organization, but rather will change careers several times. The family dynamic has changed as well, as the spouse’s professional identity has become increasingly important and geographic

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this paper, senior members are defined as Lieutenant-Colonels and above for Officers and Master Warrant Officers and above for NCMs. Estimates are based on 2013 Annual Military Occupation Review (AMOR) for RCAF occupations. Members with 25-30 years of service are entering a very attractive retirement window as they are very close to maximizing their pension.

stability becomes more of a concern. As a result, the CAF may experience difficulty in retaining its most experienced, qualified and knowledgeable personnel.

Compounding the problem of knowledge drain, in the post-Afghanistan era the Government of Canada is striving to eliminate the deficit and as the largest spender of discretionary funding, DND faces substantial budget reductions. These reductions have forced commanders to scrutinize training, education and professional development programs to determine what must be eliminated to meet targeted budget reductions. Reductions to these programs erode the CAF's ability to formally pass on key knowledge to its future leaders.

To address the knowledge drain and bridge the gap between its most experienced leaders and those destined to replace them, the RCAF launched its Mentorship Program. The RCAF Mentorship Program is a purely voluntary program designed to, "provide RCAF members with competencies, knowledge, leadership, history, as well as professional and personal development through mentorship, which will further the continued success of the RCAF and all its members".<sup>3</sup> The current iteration of the RCAF Mentorship Program was designed for Non Commissioned Members (NCM); however, the RCAF is in the process of launching the second iteration of the Program to include Officers.

The RCAF is not the first organization to attempt to use mentorship to address organizational challenges. Many organizations have endeavoured to realize personal and organizational benefits through mentoring programs. In fact, as of 2009, 70 percent of all

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<sup>3</sup> Royal Canadian Air Force, *RCAF Mentorship Program Runway for Success*, e-pamphlet last accessed 29 July 2014, [airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor\\_e.htm](http://airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor_e.htm).

Fortune 500 Companies including Xerox, IBM and KPMG have put mentorship programs in place.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, every branch of the United States Armed Forces has established formal mentoring programs.<sup>5</sup>

So why have so many organizations, including the RCAF, engaged in mentoring programs? Results from qualitative and quantitative research on mentorship have consistently illustrated substantial positive benefits for mentees, mentors as well as the whole of the organization.<sup>6</sup> Compared to those without mentors, mentees statistically experience greater compensation, higher promotion rates and greater career mobility than employees who did not have mentoring.<sup>7</sup> Mentoring can positively influence employee satisfaction and hence retention, assist in integrating recruits into the organization, enhance succession planning efforts as well as improve communication and knowledge transfer between individuals and within organizations.<sup>8</sup>

Studies have shown that mentors also experience benefits from mentoring. Mentors have reported a personal sense of fulfilment from participating in the growth and development of the mentee.<sup>9</sup> Mentors also commented that they were able to develop new networks and receive direct reports on how strategic initiatives were being received at subordinate levels.

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<sup>4</sup> Todd Gutti, "Finding Anchors in the Storm: Mentors," *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 January 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles>.

<sup>5</sup> Wanda J. Smith, Jerusalem T. Howard, and K. Vernard Harrington, "Essential formal mentor characteristics and functions in governmental and non-governmental organizations from the program administrator's and the mentor's perspective," *Public Personnel Management* 34, no. 1 (2005): 31, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/16471639.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, Mark L. Poteet, Elizabeth Lentz, and Lizzette Lima, "Career Benefits Associated With Mentoring for Proteges: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2004): 127, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> B. R. Ragins, and T. A. Scandura, "Burden or blessing? Expected costs and benefits of being a mentor," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20 (1999): 494, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

The US Army, as well as other military organizations, believes that mentorship is a key leadership development activity that can accelerate the development of professional expertise.<sup>10</sup> As such, it would be a valuable tool in combatting the knowledge drain the RCAF is currently facing due to attrition of its most senior and hence most experienced personnel. The RCAF believes that mentoring will not only help individuals meet their personal goals, but will also aid the RCAF in addressing current and future challenges; thereby, ultimately strengthening the RCAF. Through effective mentoring, there is the very real potential to foster, develop and enhance the desired values within the military profession.<sup>11</sup>

Although mentoring is widely reported as being beneficial, implementation and execution is not without risk. Many organizations have struggled to implement mentoring programs and ensure they are perceived to be valuable, effective and equitable. It has been found that the quality of mentoring provided will vary from mentor to mentor and ineffective mentoring can be more detrimental than receiving none at all.<sup>12</sup> The most cited concerns regarding mentoring relationships included mentor neglect (mostly due to lack of time), unsuccessful matching between mentees and mentors and mentees, a lack of ability to mentor and a poorly defined program or a lack of training.<sup>13</sup> Challenges specifically related to implementation of a military mentorship program include: the frequent postings of individuals, sometimes into positions of

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army Regulation 6-22, *Army Leadership Competent, Confident, and Agile* (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Washington, DC, United States. October 2006), 8-14, <https://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm6-22.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Cole Jr, "Improving Mentorship and Leader Development in the US Army" (Strategy Research Project, Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA, 2012), 10, <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

<sup>12</sup> B. R. Ragins, J. L. Cotton, and J. S. Miller, "Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes" *Academy of Management Journal*, 43 (2000): 1190, <http://media.proquest.com>.

<sup>13</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Stacy E. McManus, Shana A. Simon, and Joyce E. A. Russell, "The protégé's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57 (2000): 15, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/13579540.pdf>.

such increased responsibility such that mentor availability significantly decreases; increased operational tempo with the same or decreasing availability of human resources; and, the absence of developmental tools such as training and educational programs.

The current iteration of the RCAF mentorship program is an informal and voluntary program. As such, there is no policy, nor directives that govern its implementation. The only currently available material that describes the program is a 12-page e-pamphlet, “The RCAF Mentorship Program: Runway to Success”.<sup>14</sup>

“Runway to Success” clearly defines mentoring, briefly outlines the goals and objectives of the program and lists the potential benefits to mentor, mentee as well as the RCAF as an organization. The only additional information provided are anecdotes offered from various senior leaders describing their positive mentorship experiences. Although not directly associated with “Runway to Success,” the CAF has produced a mentoring handbook, which provides a broad overview of mentoring.<sup>15</sup>

A review of the preliminary draft of Version 2 of “Runway to Success” revealed little changes to the structure of the program with the exception of the inclusion of Officers. Although the RCAF Mentorship program is meant to be voluntary and informal; its lack of structure will result in a number of problems including the potential exclusion of those that might benefit from mentoring, inconsistent mentoring provided from different mentors, and confusion about the

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<sup>14</sup> From this point forward, this e-pamphlet will simply be referred to as “Runway to Success”.

<sup>15</sup> Lagace-Roy, and Janine Knackstedt, *Mentoring Handbook* (Kingston: Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2007). [http://airforce.mil.ca/caf/vital/cwoaf/mentorbook\\_english.pdf](http://airforce.mil.ca/caf/vital/cwoaf/mentorbook_english.pdf)

roles of the participants.<sup>16</sup> Currently, there is no mentorship training provided for either the mentor or mentee within the RCAF Mentorship Program and without the requisite skills and knowledge, the RCAF is at risk of creating false expectations on the part of both the mentor and the mentee. Worse, in the absence of specific guidance for mentors, they may engage in negative mentoring behaviours, which could lead to perceptions of favouritism and elitism and other dysfunctional behaviours.<sup>17</sup>

If it indeed continues in its current format, the RCAF Mentorship Program will not fully achieve its stated aims unless it: establishes specific guidelines for its mentoring program; develops training for both mentors and mentees; and, implements a system to ensure that mentors and mentee's are well matched. Establishing specific guidelines will ensure a common framework for mentors and mentees across the organization, while training will ensure that participants clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and develop the requisite mentoring skills. Training will also help mentors avoid negative mentoring outcomes while a system that ensures mentors and mentee's are well matched, i.e. compatible, will maximize the benefits to participants. Finally, it is critical that RCAF support and commitment to the mentorship program are clearly evident. Without additional structure to its Mentorship Program, the RCAF risks diverse interpretations of mentorship that will lead to dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes which, will significantly erode the effectiveness of a promising program. With Version 2 of "Runway to Success" under development, there is an opportunity to

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<sup>16</sup> Kewyn L Williams, "Mentorship The Need for a Formal Program" (USAWC Strategy Research Project, Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA, 2002): 1. <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

<sup>17</sup> Robert A Harney, "Development of a formal Army officer mentorship model for the twenty-first century" (Master Of Military Art And Science, Army Command And General Staff College Fort Leavenworth KS, 2000), 6, <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

implement additional structure and improvements to increase the probability of the RCAF's Mentorship Program achieving its stated goals and objectives.

## Mentorship Defined

For any mentorship program to be successful, the program must first start with a clear definition of mentorship<sup>18</sup>. Although literature dealing with mentorship reveals there to be many definitions of mentorship, most agree that mentorship is an interpersonal relationship in which a senior or more experienced person (the mentor) helps less-experienced person (the mentee) to succeed in the organization.<sup>19</sup> Ideally, the mentor takes a genuine interest in the career of the mentee.<sup>20</sup> Expanding on the definition, mentorship can be more fully defined as a dynamic, long-term relationship between mentor and mentee within which they collaboratively work towards the mentee's acquisition of the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours necessary to develop into a successful leader.<sup>21</sup> The mentor draws upon on his or her experience and wisdom to provide the mentee with advice and counsel and serves a challenge function to assist the mentee in developing the knowledge, skills and attributes to become a full member of a particular profession.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> While there is increasing research into the mentees' developmental network, which can include peer mentorships, mentorships with individuals from other organizations, family members as well as religious and community leaders, this paper will not discuss them. This paper does not discount alternative sources of mentorship as valuable, rather it focuses exclusively on the mentoring internal to the organization between the senior member and the less experienced member, as that is the intent of the RCAF Mentorship Program.

<sup>19</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Jean E. Rhodes, and Tammy D. Allen, "Definition and Evolution of Mentoring," in *The Blackwell handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Terri A Scandura, "Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes," *Journal of Management* 24, no. 3, (1998): 451, [www.jcd.sagepub.com](http://www.jcd.sagepub.com).

<sup>21</sup> Zainab Abedin, Ewelina Biskup, Karin Silet, Jane M. Garbutt, Kurt Kroenke, Mitchell D. Feldman, Richard McGee Jr, Michael Fleming, and Harold Alan Pincus, "Deriving competencies for mentors of clinical and translational scholars," *Clinical and translational science* 5, no. 3, (2012): 273, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/76457861.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 88, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

## RCAF Mentorship Program

The RCAF Mentorship is a relatively new program and is still in development. Its structure is not as robust as other military programs that will be reviewed in this paper. It is not known if that is by design or due to its current stage of development. The RCAF mentorship program defines mentorship as:

. . . A professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) voluntarily shares knowledge, insights, and wisdom with a less experienced person (the mentee) who wishes to benefit from that exchange. It is a medium- to long-term learning relationship founded on respect, honesty, trust, and mutual goals.<sup>23</sup>

The definition itself does not provide sufficient detail as to the expectations or responsibilities of either party. However, “Runway to Success” does go on to outline the goals of the program:

. . . The goal of this purely voluntary programme is to provide Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) non-commissioned members (NCMs) with competencies, knowledge, leadership, history, and professional and personal development through mentorship, which will further the continued success of the RCAF and all its members.<sup>24</sup>

The RCAF Mentorship Program was originally conceived for NCMs and outlines four long-term goals that are centred around the leadership principles of mentoring, educating, and developing personnel: Personal Development; Leadership Development; Professional Development; and, Career Development.<sup>25</sup> “Runway to Success” defines the mentor as an experienced, trusted person who is interested and willing to provide guidance while the mentee is

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<sup>23</sup> Royal Canadian Air Force, *RCAF Mentorship Program Runway for Success*, e-pamphlet last accessed 29 July 2014, [airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor\\_e.htm](http://airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor_e.htm).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

defined as a junior individual with less experience who is highly motivated to learn, develop, and grow professionally.<sup>26</sup>

The RCAF Mentorship Program outlines several objectives that are linked to the overall goal. These objectives are designed to assist the RCAF in, not only getting through its current demographic challenges, but strengthening the RCAF to better face future challenges as well. These objectives are: to prepare RCAF personnel for the future by aiding in their development; to enhance knowledge transfer; to cultivate a learning organization; to ensure personal success for the individual and overall success to the organization; and, increase the commitment to the organization and ultimately strengthen the RCAF image.<sup>27</sup>

To encourage mentees to actively seek out mentorship, “Runway to Success” outlines several potential benefits to the prospective mentee including a better understanding of the roles and expectations of the RCAF, increased self-confidence along with an improved ability to deal with ethical and leadership situations<sup>28</sup>. It is expected that mentorship will provide the mentee with lessons learned from previous successful or challenging experiences, assistance in meeting expectations and increased organizational knowledge. It is anticipated that the mentee will have greater career satisfaction, a better capability for empowered and confident decision making as well as enhanced professional and personal development.<sup>29</sup> The perceived benefits to the mentor include: inspiring and encouraging future leaders; gaining fresh perspectives; passing on one’s

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

legacy of experience; and, personal satisfaction.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the benefits the RCAF as an organization are detailed: better understanding of roles and effects used in operations; knowledge transfer; corporate memory; succession planning; increased commitment to the RCAF; and, strengthened image of the RCAF.<sup>31</sup>

The remainder of “Runway to Success” is composed of anecdotes from senior leaders across the RCAF detailing their positive experiences with mentorship and encouraging mentees and potential mentors to get involved. This is the limit of the formal structure of the RCAF Mentorship Program. There is neither amplification as to how any of these objectives, goals or benefits can be met nor mentoring strategies or expectations of the mentor or mentee. This lack of structure may result in a number of unforeseen problems and the absence of any sort of training for mentor or mentee will severely limit the program’s effectiveness.

There is clearly a difference of opinion in how mentorship programs should be structured, or if they should be structured at all. As will be seen in subsequent sections, the majority of our allies’ programs appear to be informal and rely on voluntary mentorship relationships and the RCAF seems to be headed down the same path. The question is, will this path lead to the desired destination?

## **CORE ASPECTS OF MENTORING**

### **Functions and Outcomes Associated with Mentoring**

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Any discussion on mentoring must include the mentoring functions and expected outcomes. Mentoring outcomes are typically classified as either career or psychosocial outcomes and are based on the function(s) the mentor is serving.<sup>32</sup> Psychosocial functions include role modelling, counselling, acceptance, friendship, and confirmation and can provide the mentee with a sense of competence, empowerment and self-worth.<sup>33</sup> Psychosocial outcomes can provide a mentee with better stress coping mechanisms, increased satisfaction with professional relationships and the development of future psychosocial mentoring behaviours.<sup>34</sup> Career functions include sponsorship, exposure, coaching, and provision of challenging assignments and can serve to develop the mentee's professionalism and facilitate progression. Career outcomes are predominantly related to career advancement and can include promotion, increased compensation, enhanced commitment, adoption of professional ethics and future mentoring behaviours related to career functions.<sup>35</sup>

However, one cannot automatically assume that mentoring functions and outcomes will be exclusively positive. The following sections present an overview of the potential benefits for an organization along with the potential negative aspects of mentoring. Only through a careful examination of both positive and negative aspects can an organization assure its own mentorship program delivers on expectations.

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<sup>32</sup> Georgia T. Chao, Patm Walz, and Philip D. Gardner, "Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts," *Personnel psychology* 45, no. 3, (1992): 620, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/9608140379.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 89, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Raymond A. Noe, An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships, *Personnel psychology* 41, no. 3, (1988): 459, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/j.1744-6570.1988.tb00638.x.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Kathy E. Kram, and Lynn A. Isabella, "Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development," *Academy of Management Journal* 28, no. 1, (1985): 117, [http://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2012/01/Kram\\_Mentoring-Alternatives.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2012/01/Kram_Mentoring-Alternatives.pdf).

## The Benefits of Mentoring

### Mentorship Benefits for the Organization

There are several benefits an organization can realize from an effective mentorship program. For instance, a successful mentorship program can facilitate organizational strategy. Strategic direction may not always be clearly understood by a junior mentee, but an effective mentor can provide insight into the organizational strategy along with the role the mentee plays in supporting that strategy.

A mentor can also help a mentee adapt to the organization's culture.<sup>36</sup> Through career socialization and the exchange of information, a mentee can vicariously learn the appropriate models of behaviour within the organization through their mentor.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the mentor shows the mentee 'the ropes' and can explain in a non-threatening manner why certain behaviours are expected or not appropriate. In an era where today's generation of young leaders seem to be motivated by markedly different factors than previous generations, this socialization of expected behaviours would certainly be of benefit to the RCAF.

Perhaps the greatest single benefit to an organization, certainly the RCAF, is the potential for increased commitment and retention. By providing 'third-party' clarity and perspective, a mentor can help guide the mentee through the complications of a career balanced against the

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<sup>36</sup> Robert A Harney, "Development of a formal Army officer mentorship model for the twenty-first century" (Master Of Military Art And Science, Army Command And General Staff College Fort Leavenworth KS, 2000): 21, <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

<sup>37</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, Mark L. Poteet, Elizabeth Lentz, and Lizzette Lima, "Career Benefits Associated With Mentoring for Proteges: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2004): 128, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

demands of their personal life.<sup>38</sup> Research has shown that mentees who receive effective mentoring are more committed to their organizations.<sup>39</sup> Mentees who receive developmental assistance through mentorship programs have indicated higher levels of intention to remain with an organization over the long run.<sup>40</sup> Strong communication between mentor and mentee can serve to reduce misconceptions based on viewpoints that are biased by inexperience, lack of exposure, or contextual errors that lead to the misapplication of information. This can significantly reduce the negative impact that misunderstood, or negative policy or decisions can have on a mentee. This career-socialization function has also been found to have a positive influence on the development and retention of high potential mentees.<sup>41</sup>

The RCAF Mentorship Program seeks to capitalize on the potential benefits that mentoring can provide the organization. Specifically, the RCAF hopes to enhance its members' understanding of the roles and effects used in operations and expects to more efficiently transfer knowledge from the more experienced members to less experienced members of the organization thereby increasing corporate memory. Given that knowledge is possibly the most important strategic resource for the organization, the rapid transfer of organizational knowledge between mentor and mentee is even more critical given anticipated attrition.<sup>42</sup> With a large percentage of senior members of the RCAF entering an attractive retirement window, and many of today's

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<sup>38</sup> Charles J. Dalcourt, "Mentoring: establishing a legacy, shaping the future," *Military Review* 82, no. 6, (2002): 38, <http://media.proquest.com/media/pq/classic/doc/282615961.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen M. Colarelli and Ronald C. Bishop, "Career Commitment: Functions, Correlates, and Management," *Group and Organizational Studies* 15 (1990): 159, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com>.

<sup>40</sup> Monica C. Higgins, and Kathy E. Kram, "Reconceptualizing mentoring at work: A developmental network perspective," *Academy of Management Review* 26, no. 2 (2001): 280, [http://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2012/01/Higgins-Kram\\_Reconceptualizing-Mentoring-at-Work-A-Developmental-Network-Perspective.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2012/01/Higgins-Kram_Reconceptualizing-Mentoring-at-Work-A-Developmental-Network-Perspective.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Ellen A. Ensher, and Susan E. Murphy, "The Mentoring Relationship Challenges Scale: The impact of mentoring stage, type, and gender," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79, no. 1 (2011): 255, <http://ellenensher.com/article-files/The%20Mentoring%20Relationship%20Challenges%20Scale.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Olivier Herrbach, Karim Mignonac, and Nathalie Richebe, "Undesired side effect? The promotion of non-commitment in formal vs. informal mentorship," *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22, no. 07 (2011): 1555, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/60107063.pdf>.

mentors likely belonging to that group, it is even more important that mentors pass on the knowledge and values and attitudes to their mentees.

Through a combination of these potential benefits to an organization, the RCAF may indeed enhance its succession planning efforts while also increasing the mentees commitment to the RCAF. Mentorship can also play a key role in succession planning efforts. The RCAF's succession planning activities are a deliberate effort to develop an individual's skills, knowledge and abilities to meet its future needs. Succession planning efforts are even more important given the large number of the RCAF's most experienced leaders who are now eligible for retirement.

Mentorship is key to passing on these more experienced leaders' knowledge before they retire, to those that will eventually replace them. Mentors have learned a number of valuable lessons throughout their career that can be passed on to their mentees. Some of these lessons may have come at a high price, perhaps injury or even loss of life. Mentorship can help prevent future leaders from having to relearn those lessons the hard way.

Mentors can also help mentees choose career paths that will enhance the development and acquisition of the knowledge skills and abilities they will need to assume greater responsibilities. Increased political knowledge of the organization along with expected behaviours can enhance also succession planning. By increasing the mentees knowledge and enhancing their organizational fit, their desire to remain with the organization may increase as well.

While research literature supports the RCAF's objectives, it was only when the provided mentorship was deemed functional, that is the mentoring relationship was deemed helpful and developmental. Much less desirable effects were noted when mentees perceived the mentorship they received to be dysfunctional. Therefore, the RCAF must provide mentors with guidance and training to ensure that the mentorship they provide is truly effective.

### Benefits for the Mentee

The RCAF mentorship program lists several benefits for the mentee. Specifically, the RCAF seeks to improve the mentee's understanding of the roles and expectations of the RCAF. It is believed that through effective mentoring, the mentee will develop increased self-confidence and decision making abilities as well as an enhanced capacity to deal with ethical and leadership situations. It is also assumed that the mentor will increase the mentee's knowledge of the organization. Finally, it is anticipated that mentors will assist the mentee in meeting the mentee's career expectations and as a result, the mentee will experience greater career satisfaction through enhanced personal and professional development.<sup>43</sup>

The literature supports the objective of increasing the mentee's knowledge of the organization and its role. The most obvious function the mentor provides in this regard is that of information exchange and knowledge acquisition. The mentor, being the more knowledgeable, simply educates the mentee about the organization. Less obvious is the beneficial result of both the mentor and mentee increasing their familiarity with their opposite's respective organizations. The mentor-mentee relationship can enable both participants to become much more knowledgeable of initiatives and occurrences that were not within their immediate

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<sup>43</sup> Royal Canadian Air Force, *RCAF Mentorship Program Runway for Success*, e-pamphlet last accessed 29 July 2014, [airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor\\_e.htm](http://airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor_e.htm).

organization.<sup>44</sup> This outcome is truly collaborative and mutually beneficial to both mentee and mentor. On one hand, the mentee enhances their understanding of the factors, considerations and pressures that the mentor operates within, while the mentor may get a better sense for how lower-level organizations are dealing with the strategies and policies that are being promulgated at the strategic level.

Equally promising is that academic studies have shown that mentorship can boost the confidence of the mentee. By explaining, contextualizing and providing different perspectives on organizational events, the mentor influences the mentee's perception and interpretation of the event, which will shape how the mentee reacts to complex or stressful events.<sup>45</sup> With this additional insight, the mentee is in a better position to make decisions that are aligned with strategic intent, which can also assist in boosting the mentee's confidence.

The literature also supports the RCAF's objective of enhancing the mentee's personal and professional development. As a role model, the mentor is in a position to provide exposure to the rest of the organization.<sup>46</sup> This exposure to other senior leaders or even just other facets of the organization can increase the mentee's chances of becoming recognized experts within their

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<sup>44</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, "Protégé's' and mentors' reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 447, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> John J. Sosik, and Veronica M. Godshalk, "Leadership styles, mentoring functions received, and job-related stress: a conceptual model and preliminary study," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21, no. 4, (2000): 372, [https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/14\\_ftp.pdf](https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/14_ftp.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Wanda J. Smith, Jerusalem T. Howard, and K. Vernard Harrington, "Essential formal mentor characteristics and functions in governmental and non-governmental organizations from the program administrator's and the mentor's perspective," *Public Personnel Management* 34, no. 1 (2005): 49, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/16471639.pdf>.

field.<sup>47</sup> This networking opportunity provides the mentee with a chance to display their knowledge, skills and potential to other leaders within the organization to whom they might not have otherwise had access.<sup>48</sup> This exposure is not necessarily sponsorship, but rather a mentor providing an opportunity to a mentee to demonstrate his or her skills to an audience that might not otherwise be available to the mentee. This exposure can certainly serve to assist in the professional development of the mentee by developing a broad base of contacts both within, and outside of, their direct reporting chains.<sup>49</sup>

A corollary effect of this exposure and networking is organizational socialization. Socialization is the process by which individuals adopt the attitudes, values, and culture of an organization.<sup>50</sup> Mentorship can be a highly effective method to building understanding about how things work in the organization<sup>51</sup> Through organizational socialization, the mentee is exposed to formal and informal work relationships which, enhances their understanding of power structures and the organization's culture.<sup>52</sup> Through mentorship and networking, the mentor can provide organizational context to the mentee's experiences and as a consequence, the mentee further develops their political skill and understanding of the organization's values and culture.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen M. Colarelli and Ronald C. Bishop, "Career Commitment: Functions, Correlates, and Management," *Group and Organizational Studies* 15 (1990): 159, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com>.

<sup>48</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, Mark L. Poteet, Elizabeth Lentz, and Lizzette Lima, "Career Benefits Associated With Mentoring for Proteges: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2004): 128, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

<sup>49</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, "Protégé's' and mentors' reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 449, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Fred R Blass, Robyn L. Brouer, Pamela L. Perrewé, and Gerald R. Ferris, "Politics Understanding and Networking Ability as a Function of Mentoring The Roles of Gender and Race," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 14, no. 2 (2007): 93, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Gerald R. Ferris, Darren C. Treadway, Robert W. Kolodinsky, Wayne A. Hochwarter, Charles J. Kacmar, Cesar Douglas, and Dwight D. Frink, "Development and validation of the political skill inventory," *Journal of Management* 31, no. 1 (2005): 127, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jom.sagepub.com/content/126.full.pdf>.

Of all the mentorship benefits to the mentee, overall career success is the one that is cited most often.<sup>54</sup> Mentoring has been found to be positively related to compensation and promotion in civilian fields.<sup>55</sup> This result is, at least partially, attributable to the combined effect of the increased confidence, enhanced knowledge, clarity and perspective that an effective mentor can provide the mentee.

The mentor can provide unbiased career-planning advice. When a mentee is offered a job opportunity, the mentor can act as an advisor and confidant for the mentee to weigh the opportunity against personal and professional considerations. While this advice is predominately career-related, when the discussion of work–life balance is included, the mentor is fulfilling both career-related and psychosocial functions.<sup>56</sup> However, the key to effective career advice is having a mentor who is not only very knowledgeable about which direction the organization is going, but also what knowledge, skills and attributes are expected of the mentee at subsequent leadership levels. Where career management is typically only concerned with the mentee’s next opportunity, a mentor has to have a more complete knowledge of the path(s) the mentee can take to fully develop as a senior leader, whether NCM or Officer.

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<sup>54</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Tammy D. Allen, Sarah C. Evans, Thomas Ng, and David L. DuBois, “Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 256, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879107000401-main.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Georgia T. Chao, Patm Walz, and Philip D. Gardner, “Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts,” *Personnel psychology* 45, no. 3, (1992): 622, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/9608140379.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, “Protégés’ and mentors’ reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 448, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

Through effective mentoring, a mentee benefits from information sharing, social networking, counselling and friendship and will not only perform better in their current job, but will also be better prepared for future posts. However, the organization must be careful to ensure that the career planning function does not deviate towards sponsorship, which can lead to protectionism, elitism and other negative aspects of mentorship. Negative mentoring outcomes will be discussed in subsequent sections.

### Benefits for the Mentor

Mentorship literature details a number of benefits that the mentor can derive from a healthy mentoring relationship. It is often reported that being a mentor may in fact enhance the mentor's own performance. "Runway to Success" provides some indications of the anticipated benefits to the mentor including the satisfaction of inspiring and encouraging future leaders, gaining a fresh perspective on the work environment and passing on one's legacy of experience.<sup>57</sup>

Gaining fresh perspective is a benefit to the mentor that is clearly supported in literature. The feedback provided to the mentor by the mentee on how strategic and operational decisions and policies are impacting the mentee's environment provides a fresh perspective on those impacts.<sup>58</sup> Essentially, the mentee keeps the mentor abreast of changes, impacts and issues being faced at lower levels in the organization.<sup>59</sup> This perspective continuously evolves and matures as

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<sup>57</sup> Royal Canadian Air Force, *RCAF Mentorship Program Runway for Success*, e-pamphlet last accessed 29 July 2014, [airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor\\_e.htm](http://airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor_e.htm).

<sup>58</sup> William A. Gentry, Todd J. Weber, and Golnaz Sadri, "Examining career-related mentoring and managerial performance across cultures: A multilevel analysis," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 243, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=11936>.pdf.

<sup>59</sup> Rowena Ortiz-Walters, "Mentorship Collaborations: A Longitudinal Examination of the Association with Job Performance and Gender," *Journal of Business & Economic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2009): 28, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/38591586.pdf>

the mentee advances within the organization.<sup>60</sup> While clearly a benefit to the mentor, this also benefits the organization if the mentor is in a position to use that new perspective to shape organizational strategy or policy. This consequence of mentoring would certainly be of benefit to the RCAF with its current challenges.

Due to manning shortfalls and budget restrictions, there have been a number of key human resource policy changes that have impacted the CAF. Some of these policy changes, including changes to Imposed Restriction (IR) benefits and severance (among others), were implemented without prior warning or consultation. As a result, strategic policy was promulgated without a full understanding of the impact to individuals, particularly those in lower income brackets. The mentor can provide a non-threatening avenue to discuss the impact of such initiatives as well as a conduit for feedback back up through the chain of command. While this example serves to illustrate a means to communicate negative impacts, mentors can be used in a similar manner to discuss the positive impacts of strategic direction as well as transmit suggestions from mentees that might even enhance the effectiveness of organizational direction.

Research supports the RCAF's assertion that mentors will benefit from passing on their legacy of experience. Mentors have reported a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment from developing the next generation of leaders.<sup>61</sup> The personal satisfaction of having a hand in the professional success of their mentee's can reinforce the mentor's sense of competence and

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<sup>60</sup> B. R. Ragins, and T. A. Scandura, "Burden or blessing? Expected costs and benefits of being a mentor," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20 (1999): 497, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 494.

provide a feeling of significant accomplishment.<sup>62</sup> These mentors reported that advising mentee's on challenges the mentee was facing also enabled them to reflect on their own experiences, strengths and areas for development.<sup>63</sup> The passing on of one's experience to a junior member and having a hand in their development fulfils the mentor's need for self-actualization. It should be no surprise that motivated mentors would derive some personal pleasure from their role as mentor.

While there are clearly benefits to be gained by prospective mentors from participating in an effective mentorship program, there are some issues with the intended benefits for mentors. For instance, without guidance or training, how are prospective mentors to develop a mentoring and coaching philosophy? What is that philosophy? What behaviours are mentors to avoid so as to side step the negative outcomes of bad mentorship? As will be discussed in subsequent sections, mentoring is not necessarily a natural skill that all leaders possess and so mentors need training to certify that they understand the potential negative outcomes of mentorship and to ensure that they are indeed capable of effective mentoring.

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<sup>62</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, "Protégé's' and mentors' reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 449, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

## Potential Negative Aspects of Mentoring

The majority of research concerning mentorship focuses on the positive aspects of mentoring. Although there is far less literature that discusses the potential negative outcomes of mentorship, it would be naïve to assume that all mentoring relationships and outcomes are completely positive. Instead, like other personal relationships, mentoring relationships consist of both positive and negative experiences. The quality of mentoring can vary dramatically and a bad mentor may prove to be worse than none at all.<sup>64</sup>

The literature has identified several negative mentoring behaviours including neglect and betrayal of trust.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, it has been shown that mentoring relationships vary in satisfaction and effectiveness as the relationship evolves through time.<sup>66</sup> Also, dysfunctional mentoring processes may negatively impact strategic HR processes such as succession planning when the mentee is not receiving the proper guidance to assume the next post.<sup>67</sup> Given the potential impact an effective mentorship program can have on the overall success of an organization, the negative outcomes of mentorship must be examined so that the appropriate structure can be put in place to avoid them.

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<sup>64</sup> B. R. Ragins, J. L. Cotton, and J. S. Miller, "Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes" *Academy of Management Journal*, 43 (2000): 1190, <http://media.proquest.com>.

<sup>65</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Stacy E. McManus, Shana A. Simon, and Joyce E. A. Russell, "The protégé's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57 (2000): 6, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/13579540.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> Ellen A. Ensher, and Susan E. Murphy, "The Mentoring Relationship Challenges Scale: The impact of mentoring stage, type, and gender," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79, no. 1 (2011): 255, <http://ellenensher.com/article-files/The%20Mentoring%20Relationship%20Challenges%20Scale.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> Terri A Scandura, "Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes," *Journal of Management* 24, no. 3, (1998): 451, [www.jcd.sagepub.com](http://www.jcd.sagepub.com).

## Sponsorship

Mentorship is composed of distinct functions provided by mentors to mentees: the career and the psychosocial.<sup>68</sup> Sponsorship is an element of the career function of mentorship and occurs when a mentor intervenes to ensure that their mentees obtain desirable assignments. Unfortunately, the element of sponsorship is primarily responsible for the negative perceptions often associated with mentorship programs. By serving a sponsorship function, mentors are seen to be providing unfair advantage to their mentees and are essentially facilitating nepotism.<sup>69</sup> When mentors intervene on behalf of their mentees, the mentee's peers may perceive this intervention to be favouritism and elitism.<sup>70</sup>

“Runway to Success” states that one of the objectives of its mentorship program is to ensure personal success for the individual, while the long-term goals include career development. “Runway to Success” also states that the RCAF expects to enhance its succession planning through mentorship.<sup>71</sup> These stated objectives, goals and benefits might be misinterpreted by the mentee, mentor or both. Without specific guidance, or at the least, amplification of what career development entails (and what it does not), a mentor may adopt the role of sponsor in order to meet this particular aspect of the RCAF mentorship program.

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<sup>68</sup> Kathy E. Kram, and Lynn A. Isabella, “Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development,” *Academy of Management Journal* 28, no. 1, (1985): 117, [http://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2012/01/Kram\\_Mentoring-Alternatives.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/sph/files/2012/01/Kram_Mentoring-Alternatives.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> B. R. Ragins, and T. A. Scandura, “Burden or blessing? Expected costs and benefits of being a mentor,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20 (1999): 494, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>.

<sup>70</sup> Robert A Harney, “Development of a formal Army officer mentorship model for the twenty-first century” (Master Of Military Art And Science, Army Command And General Staff College Fort Leavenworth KS, 2000): 6, <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

<sup>71</sup> Royal Canadian Air Force, *RCAF Mentorship Program Runway for Success*, e-pamphlet last accessed 29 July 2014, [airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor\\_e.htm](http://airforce.mil.ca/cwoaf/mentor_e.htm).

The RCAF currently does not have any specific guidance for mentors regarding how to assist their mentee in achieving personal success, or enhance succession-planning efforts.

Without clarification, there is a real danger that mentors may engage in the negative function of sponsorship. This is an oversight that the RCAF must correct.

### Elitism

Unfortunately formal mentorship programs sometimes lead to the development of elitism amongst some mentees. In a formal program, mentees are typically selected and they are often viewed as being on the ‘fast track’ for promotion. If a mentor engages in sponsorship behaviours such as intervening on the mentee’s behalf to secure favourable assignments, it will serve to enhance the perception of elitism.

Elitism can lead to several related problems. Mentees may enter into mentoring programs with expectations of accelerated advancement. If they advance more quickly than their peers due to factors such as sponsorship or other actions directly related to mentorship, they may become the model for their peers’ career development plans and expectations. As this behaviour is socialized and becomes a phenomenon within the mentorship program, the effectiveness of the program is significantly lessened.<sup>72</sup> If on the other hand, their progression does not meet their expectations, they may develop apathy to the mentoring relationship. Morale problems will arise amongst those who are not receiving mentorship and those individuals may even resent those who do receive it.

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<sup>72</sup> Fred R. Blass, and Gerald R. Ferris, “Leader reputation: The role of mentoring, political skill, contextual learning, and adaptation,” *Human Resource Management* 46, no. 1 (2007): 11, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/24192353.pdf>

The phenomenon of elitism is difficult to predict or avoid as it is based primarily on the mentee's character. While mentors can enable the perceptions of elitism by providing what appears to be preferential treatment, it is the mentee's interpretation of mentorship outcomes that results in the development of an elitist subculture. However, the organization can curtail elitism by providing clear guidance to mentors and mentees on acceptable and unacceptable mentoring behaviours.

Further, by making the mentorship as inclusionary as practicable, the development of elitist attitudes can be reduced. Unfortunately from a practical standpoint, with a limited amount of mentors available, mentorship inherently becomes exclusionary. It is therefore critical that adequate guidance be provided to mentors and mentees to manage expectations so as to ensure perceptions of elitism are avoided.

### Mentor Neglect

In a study focused on the negative experiences of mentees, it was found that mentor neglect was the most frequently reported negative experience.<sup>73</sup> Mentor neglect can occur in either informal or formal mentorship programs and is defined as behaviour whereby the mentor exhibits either disinterest in a particular mentee, or a lack of commitment to the mentorship program. These mentees may have benefited from mentoring but reported that, in general, the mentor's behaviours indicated a lack of interest in the mentee.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Lillian T. Eby, Stacy E. McManus, Shana A. Simon, and Joyce E. A. Russell, "The protégé's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57 (2000): 15, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/13579540.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup>Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, "Protégés' and mentors' reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 451, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

Mentor neglect may not be caused by disinterest, but rather because the mentor does not fully understand their new responsibilities as a mentor.<sup>75</sup> In the absence of guidance or training, mentors may reflect back on their own experiences as a mentee as the basis for expected mentor behaviours. If this is indeed the case, one would expect that those who had no mentor, or received little mentoring, would themselves be less capable of developing effective mentoring relationships.<sup>76</sup> Neglect may simply be a matter of the mentor not having enough time to fully engage in a mentoring relationship.

Encouraging more mentoring is not the solution to mentor neglect. More is not necessarily better. The perception that the mentee is receiving adequate support and guidance from their mentoring relationship is far more important than the amount of mentorship provided.<sup>77</sup>

The RCAF Mentorship program, in its current form, provides no training and little specific guidance for mentors. Given that the RCAF mentorship program is in its infancy, at least in a formal sense, it would be naïve to assume that all prospective mentors have themselves been previously involved in an enriching mentorship experience. Without additional guidance or training, and without their own mentorship experiences to fall back on, there is a very real risk that prospective mentors will not be in a position to provide quality mentorship functions to their mentees.

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<sup>75</sup> Wanda J. Smith, Jerusalem T. Howard, and K. Vernard Harrington, "Essential formal mentor characteristics and functions in governmental and non-governmental organizations from the program administrator's and the mentor's perspective," *Public Personnel Management* 34, no. 1 (2005): 35, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/16471639.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Angela M. Young and Pamela L. Perrewé, "What did you expect? An examination of career-related support and social support among mentors and protégés," *Journal of Management* 26, no. 4 (2000): 616, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jom.sagepub.com/content/26/4/611.pdf>.

The potential negative aspects of a mentorship program outline why it is critical for any mentorship program to be well developed and include training and socialization on what is expected of the participants. Without so much as a discussion of the potential negative outcomes associated with mentorship, dysfunctional mentorship will occur in the RCAF. The RCAF needs to take a hard look at its program and, at the very least, develop a training program or and RCAF-specific guidance handbook that presents these negative aspects as well as potential strategies and restraints to avoid them.

### **Informal Models of Mentorship Programs**

Mentorship programs are typically classified as either formal, or informal. The determination of whether a program is formal or informal is largely dependant on how the relationship forms between the mentor and mentee. Informal mentoring relationships form naturally due to the mentee's psychosocial needs and the corresponding mentors' developmental needs.<sup>78</sup> The matching of mentor and mentee often develops over time through their interactions at various stages in the mentee's career. From these interactions, mentees demonstrate potential that the mentor decides is worthy of further development. Typically, the mentor-mentee match occurs due to their similar philosophies and approaches to situations.<sup>79</sup> As a result, informal mentoring relationships tend to be more committed, intense and natural than those induced through formal mentorship programs.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Georgia T. Chao, Patm Walz, and Philip D. Gardner, "Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts," *Personnel psychology* 45, no. 3, (1992): 621, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/9608140379.pdf>.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 621.

<sup>80</sup> Georgia T. Chao, "Formal mentoring: Lessons learned from past practice," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 40, no. 3, (2009): 315, <http://www.chiesman.org/participation/customedits/images/LiteratureSynthesis3references.pdf>

The nature by which the relationship between mentee and mentor develops in an informal relationship does induce some advantages. Research indicates that mentees in informal relationships tend to receive more career and psychosocial outcomes and derive greater satisfaction from informal mentorship as compared to that reported from mentees participating in formal programs<sup>81</sup>. The literature also indicates that the more similar mentees and mentors are in terms of ideologies, the greater the amount and quality of mentoring received.<sup>82</sup> This finding, and others like it, indicates that a successful match between mentor and mentee may be the critical enabler to effective mentorship. While subjective in nature, mentees who perceived more similarity to their mentors, reported greater mentor effectiveness, less intention to leave the organization, and better success in meeting career expectations.<sup>83</sup>

However, informal mentorship programs do have some disadvantages. Because these relationships develop without the implicit involvement of the organization, they are likely not linked to organizational goals, nor is there any training available to either mentee or mentor or specific guidance as to process or expected outcomes. Therefore in an informal mentorship program, mentorship quality and outcomes will likely vary substantially between mentor and mentee pairs.

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<sup>81</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 89, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Stacy E. McManus, Shana A. Simon, and Joyce E. A. Russell, "The protégé's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57 (2000): 14, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/13579540.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> Tammy D. Allen, and Lillian T. Eby, "Factors Related to Effective Mentorships," *In Southern Management Association 2003 Meeting*, p. 190. (2003): 193, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com>.

Since individuals may decide to mentor or not solely due to similarities or differences in personalities, mentorship in an informal program is an inherently exclusive process.<sup>84</sup> There will always be individuals who will be excluded that would potentially benefit from mentoring relationships.<sup>85</sup> This is not to say that formal mentorship programs are inherently inclusionary; however, they can be structured to ensure that all individuals receive at least some level of mentorship.

### Formal Model of Mentorship Programs

As opposed to informal mentoring, formal mentoring is managed and sanctioned by the organization<sup>86</sup>. In a formal mentorship program, the mentoring relationship is typically induced by the organization by pairing mentors with mentees. This pairing may be random, assigned by a committee responsible for the program or based on mentee occupation and background. Because of the formal nature of the program, availability of mentors is an additional consideration. If the program is truly inclusionary, the number of assigned mentees may overwhelm the mentor and the quality of their interaction will be degraded.

There are issues with formal programs. As opposed to the informal program where the mentor chooses to take on a particular mentee, in a formal program mentors may not view the assigned mentee as deserving of special attention.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, whereas the mentor-mentee

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<sup>84</sup> Charles J. Dalcourt, "Mentoring: establishing a legacy, shaping the future," *Military Review* 82, no. 6, (2002): 35, <http://media.proquest.com/media/pq/classic/doc/282615961.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> Kewyn L Williams, "Mentorship The Need for a Formal Program" (USAWC Strategy Research Project, Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA, 2002): 1, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com>

<sup>86</sup> Olivier Herrbach, Karim Mignonac, and Nathalie Richebe, "Undesired side effect? The promotion of non-commitment in formal vs. informal mentorship," *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22, no. 07 (2011): 1555, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/60107063.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> Georgia T.Chao, Patm Walz, and Philip D. Gardner, "Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts," *Personnel psychology* 45, no. 3, (1992): 621, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/9608140379.pdf>.

relationship forms naturally in an informal program, it may take an extended period of time for mentors and mentees to develop an effective relationship in a formal program.<sup>88</sup> When mentees are assigned to mentors, their relationship may lack the ideological compatibility, which facilitates the interpersonal interactions that lead to the provision of psychosocial functions.<sup>89</sup>

Informal mentorships develop because of the mentor's desire to help develop the mentee.<sup>90</sup> Without that natural desire and similarity in personalities there is a deleterious impact on positive mentoring outcomes.<sup>91</sup> Formally assigned mentorships result in less interpersonal ease, decreased motivation to provide mentoring, and ultimately less communication and interaction.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, mentees in formal mentorships reported that their mentors were found to be less interested and more neglectful when compared to mentees who entered informal mentorships.<sup>93</sup>

Formal mentorship programs do have advantages over informal mentoring relationships. Formalized programs are structured to have greater ties to organizational objectives and researchers have found that mentees in formal mentoring programs reported better organizational

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Fiona M. Kay, John Hagan, and Patricia Parker, "Principals in practice: The importance of mentorship in the early stages of career development," *Law & Policy* 31, no. 1 (2009): 76, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> Georgia T. Chao, Patm Walz, and Philip D. Gardner, "Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts," *Personnel psychology* 45, no. 3, (1992): 621, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/9608140379.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> Ellen A. Ensher, and Susan E. Murphy, "The Mentoring Relationship Challenges Scale: The impact of mentoring stage, type, and gender," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79, no. 1 (2011): 257, <http://ellenensher.com/article-files/The%20Mentoring%20Relationship%20Challenges%20Scale.pdf>.

<sup>92</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 89, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Angie L. Lockwood, and Marcus Butts, "Perceived support for mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 68, no. 2 (2006): 279, <http://web.uta.edu/management/marcusbutts/articles/EbyLockwoodButts.JVB.2006.pdf>.

fit than those in informal relationships.<sup>94</sup> A formal mentorship program provides structure, benefits and organizational support that, by definition, do not exist in informal mentoring relationships. Some of these benefits include education and training for mentees and mentors, program performance measurement and integration into the organization's strategy.

Though each approach has advantages and disadvantages, neither approach is perfect. The more natural mentor-mentee matching in the informal system asserts increased motivation and commitment from both the mentor and the mentee, but the informal system lacks the training, guidance and organizational support of the formal program. Without this training, the quality and consistency of mentorship cannot be assured. Informal mentorship is inherently more exclusive and so if one of the objectives is to globally enhance mentees personal and professional development, a formal program will be the better fit.

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<sup>94</sup> Ellen A. Ensher, and Susan E. Murphy, "The Mentoring Relationship Challenges Scale: The impact of mentoring stage, type, and gender," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79, no. 1 (2011): 257, <http://ellenensher.com/article-files/The%20Mentoring%20Relationship%20Challenges%20Scale.pdf>.

## Formal Versus Informal Considerations for the RCAF

The RCAF needs to carefully consider whether it will pursue and develop a formal mentorship program or will be content with informal mentoring relationships that develop naturally between mentees and mentors. The fact that spontaneous mentoring relationships occur without the support of the organization or the structure of a formal program provides proof that mentoring is more than an organizational imperative.<sup>95</sup> There clearly is a genuine and personal need and desire for psychosocial and career related support on the part the mentee.

Further, there appears to be a natural desire for certain individuals to adopt the role of mentor. The varying quality of mentoring experiences of mentees in informal compared to formal programs strongly correlates to the naturally developed relationship of trust and respect that is established from the outset of the informal mentoring relationship. The mentee-mentor match is the informal program's greatest strength. However, informal programs are not linked to organizational goals, nor is there any training available to either mentee or mentor. Without the structure, support, training and guidance of a formalized program, there is a very real risk that the RCAF Mentorship Program will not meet all of its stated objectives.

Thus to increase the chances of program success, the RCAF should develop a more formalized program that provides a direct link to organization objectives. The RCAF also needs to provide the necessary training and guidance and training to ensure that mentoring is fairly consistent in quality while avoiding some of the potential negative mentoring outcomes.

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<sup>95</sup> Enrique Sampson Jr., I. I. James, and Warren D. St. James, "Mentorship Interactions In The Aviation Or Aerospace Industries," *Academy of Strategic Management Journal* 11.2 (2012): 36, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/77929882.pdf>.

However, the RCAF Mentorship Program needs to develop a system that mimics the natural mentor-mentee relationship that forms naturally in informal mentoring. Following these recommendations will maximize the RCAF Mentorship Program's effectiveness for both the organization and its participants. This matching aspect will be explored later in this paper.

### Obstacles to Effective Mentoring

From a programmatic perspective, the literature identifies several obstacles to mentorship programs including poor planning of the process, mentor shortage, unsuccessful matching, and a lack of understanding regarding the mentoring process.<sup>96</sup> While these are not negative aspects of mentorship per se, these obstacles must be considered as their existence has the potential to significantly degrade the mentorship program's effectiveness. This section focuses on two of those obstacles, as they are the most likely to impact the RCAF's mentorship program.

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<sup>96</sup> Lisa C. Ehrich, Brian Hansford, and Lee Tennent, "Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature," *Educational administration quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2004): 531, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/518.full.pdf>.

### Unsuccessful Matching of Mentors and Mentees

Incompatibility between the mentee and mentor is often cited as a significant obstacle to effective mentoring. The incompatibilities were often the result of differences in personality, expertise or philosophical differences.<sup>97</sup> The research reviewed in preparing this paper revealed that mismatches between mentees and mentors were, in some cases, responsible for a complete breakdown of the mentoring relationship.<sup>98</sup> Across industries, professional and personality mismatches between mentors and mentees were a major concern. In some cases, both parties to the mentoring relationship expressed apprehension about not getting along due to differing personalities, philosophies and approaches to the various issues that were affecting the mentee.

The difference between how mentees and mentors were matched in informal and formal programs could explain the apparent greater psychosocial success of informal mentoring. In informal mentoring, mentors and mentees select each other instinctively due to similarity of interests and personality characteristics.<sup>99</sup> The most common factors that mentees and mentors stated contributed to their effective mentoring relationship were their shared interests, ideological similarity and their satisfaction with the mentoring interactions.<sup>100</sup> The overlapping of these

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<sup>97</sup> Tammy D. Allen, and Lillian T. Eby, "Factors Related to Effective Mentorships," *In Southern Management Association 2003 Meeting*, p. 190. (2003): 193, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com>.

<sup>98</sup> Lisa C. Ehrich, Brian Hansford, and Lee Tennent, "Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature," *Educational administration quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2004): 527, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/518.full.pdf>.

<sup>99</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 89, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

interests and shared experiences develops greater interpersonal comfort and influences mentoring behaviours because mentees are able to better relate to their mentors.<sup>101</sup>

There is evidence that a “forced” match between mentee and mentor, as often occurs in formal program, can lead to interpersonal unease with mentees reporting less psychosocial and career support provided by their mentors.<sup>102</sup> For instance, for some occupations in the RCAF, the mentee-mentor match was instituted by the Senior Occupation Advisor (SOA) with the only consideration being similarity in occupational background. However, occupational-based similarities are only one matching criteria and are not effective indicators of interpersonal compatibility. Occupation specific matches ensure that the mentor has the expertise to provide effective professional development advice, particularly important at lower rank levels where the mentee still has much to learn about the occupation. While occupation specific matching makes sense at these lower levels of leadership, the mentee may eventually attain a rank level where an occupation-specific focus would no longer be of benefit.

As Officers and NCMs progress through the ranks, they are less relied upon to be subject matter experts as it relates to their military occupation. Rather, they evolve into generalists with a broader leadership and managerial role and move through the tactical to operational to strategic level of decision-making. Therefore, it may not be completely effective to match mentors to

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<sup>101</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Rachel Day, and Elizabeth Lentz, “The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships,” *Journal of Career Development* 31, no. 3 (2005): 165, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/31/3/155.pdf>.

<sup>102</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, “Protégé’s’ and mentors’ reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 450, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

mentees solely based on occupation–related criteria. As a mentee evolves, so to must the match between mentee and mentor.

It is far more likely that a strong interpersonal relationship will form between mentee and mentor who share similar interests, goals as well as background.<sup>103</sup> Because these pairings were made by a third party and based solely on occupational background, there is far less interpersonal comfort between these pairings and it takes longer for the mentor and mentee to develop a close, trusting relationship, if one can be developed at all.<sup>104</sup>

The literature indicates that successful matches between mentees and mentors will maximize the benefits of the mentoring relationship. RCAF mentees may not have had enough contact with prospective mentors to determine compatibility, and as a result the RCAF may have to facilitate the matching process. If facilitation is required; to ensure a strong mentor-mentee match, the RCAF should design the process to simulate how the mentoring relationship naturally develops between mentee and mentor. This could be accomplished by providing mentors and mentees with input into the matching process.<sup>105</sup> This input enables the mentee and mentor to exhibit some control over the mentoring relationship and may increase the

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<sup>103</sup> Felissa K. Lee, Thomas W. Dougherty, and Daniel B. Turban, “The role of personality and work values in mentoring programs,” *Review of Business-Saint Johns University* 21, no. 1 (1999): 35, [https://business.missouri.edu/sites/default/files/publication/lee\\_dougherty\\_turban\\_rev\\_of\\_bus\\_2000.pdf](https://business.missouri.edu/sites/default/files/publication/lee_dougherty_turban_rev_of_bus_2000.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, “Protégé’s’ and mentors’ reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation,” *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 444, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

<sup>105</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, and Elizabeth Lentz, “Mentorship behaviors and mentorship quality associated with formal mentoring programs: closing the gap between research and practice,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 91, no. 3 (2006): 568, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/21291238.pdf>.

possibility of a successful match.<sup>106</sup> The greater the input that mentor and mentee have in the matching process, the greater the potential for compatibility, commitment and perceived effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.<sup>107</sup>

Given that one of the most frequently reported obstacles to the development of an effective mentoring program was an incompatibility of values and work habits between mentee and mentor, the opportunity to have input into the matching process and potentially screen out a mentor or mentee who is perceived as incompatible will increase the overall chance of program success.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, it is often reported that when mentors and mentees feel that they had input into the matching process, they reported more positive mentoring relationships.<sup>109</sup>

If a system cannot be devised whereby mentors and mentees have a say in their matching, there are alternative methods by which matching can be accomplished. Organizations have developed tools that enable mentees to select mentors based on established criteria through a web-based matching instrument. This tool is populated by first having both the mentors and mentees complete questionnaires. The mentor may be asked to describe themselves in terms of leadership or mentorship style as well as provide a list of their work experiences. Mentees on the other hand are asked to be honest about their career objectives as well as choose from a list of

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<sup>106</sup> Felissa K. Lee, Thomas W. Dougherty, and Daniel B. Turban, "The role of personality and work values in mentoring programs," *Review of Business-Saint Johns University* 21, no. 1 (1999): 35, [https://business.missouri.edu/sites/default/files/publication/lee\\_dougherty\\_turban\\_rev\\_of\\_bus\\_2000.pdf](https://business.missouri.edu/sites/default/files/publication/lee_dougherty_turban_rev_of_bus_2000.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> Lillian T. Eby, and Angie Lockwood, "Protégé's' and mentors' reactions to participating in formal mentoring programs: A qualitative investigation," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 67, no. 3 (2005): 453, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879104000934-main.pdf>.

<sup>108</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Stacy E. McManus, Shana A. Simon, and Joyce E. A. Russell, "The protégé's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57 (2000): 11, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/13579540.pdf>.

<sup>109</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, and Elizabeth Lentz, "The relationship between formal mentoring program characteristics and perceived program effectiveness," *Personnel Psychology* 59, no. 1 (2006): 144, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/19683024.pdf>.

characteristics they feel their mentor should display. By matching the responses from the two sets of questionnaires, the web-based tool can estimate the degree of compatibility between prospective mentors and mentees. Such systems have reportedly met with some success and would be most beneficial in geographically disperse organizations where prospective mentees and mentors may not cross paths that often. These systems can even be automated through web-based tools, which can greatly simplify the matching process.

Matching personalities is difficult and may only be truly effective when based on previous interactions between mentor and mentee. However, if both parties have realistic expectations and are committed to the process, personality matching may not be that important. Ideologies and values can be matched through a pairing instrument and when combined with committed mentors and mentees, should suffice to facilitate an effective pairing.

The RCAF mentorship program, in its current format, is designed to be completely voluntary, meaning mentees are expected to seek out mentors within the RCAF on their own. Unfortunately, there is no guidance on how mentees should select mentors let alone how to increase the chances of compatibility. While it may make sense for the program to be voluntary, the RCAF should develop some form of matching instrument that solicits input from mentees regarding specific values, characteristics and interests that can then be matched against prospective mentors. At the very least, guidance must be provided as to what mentees and mentors should look for in matches. It is critical that both parties truly invest in the mentoring relationship and by enabling them to provide input into the mentee-mentor pairing, the likelihood

of interpersonal comfort will be increased and there will be a greater chance that they will work together to maximize the relationship.

### Mentor Shortage

The hierarchical nature of any military organization results in there being significant imbalance between the number of mentees who could benefit from mentoring and the number of mentors at the desired rank who can provide mentoring. The number of mentors is likely further diminished when one considers that not all prospective mentors will volunteer to be mentors. Further limiting the number of mentors available is the personal limit to the number of effective mentoring relationships a mentor can support.<sup>110</sup> While that number is mentor specific, it still further limits the number of mentees that will be able to secure a mentor who matches their personality and philosophy and who is also willing to enter into a mentoring relationship. An additional factor that limits the number of mentors available is the fact that not everyone is suited to be a mentor.<sup>111</sup> Mentor selection will be examined in a subsequent section, but suitability does further limit the number of mentors available.

Although the RCAF desires their program to be completely voluntary, it may prove necessary to recruit mentors to ensure that sufficient mentors are available. However, as mentioned earlier in this paper, whether a mentor-mentee pairing forms naturally or is coerced may affect the mentorship outcomes. Mentors who voluntarily participate in the program may be actively seeking the opportunity for self-actualization along with the satisfaction and challenge of developing tomorrow's leaders. However, if the mentor is recruited, they may not direct as

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<sup>110</sup> Bette R. Washington, "Mentorship: An Army Dilemma" (Strategy Research Project, Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA, 2002): 14, <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

<sup>111</sup> Lisa C. Ehrich, Brian Hansford, and Lee Tennent, "Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature," *Educational administration quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2004): 535, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/518.full.pdf>.

much attention and effort to the mentoring relationship, which will obviously adversely affect the quality of the provided mentoring.<sup>112</sup>

A potential shortage of mentors is simply a factor that the RCAF must consider and be prepared for in the further development of the mentorship program. Although one might desire the program to be inclusive, the fact remains that there are simply not enough mentors to be had and so the program is at risk of either being exclusive, i.e. not everyone will receive mentorship, or the limited number of mentors will be overwhelmed by the number of mentees and unable to provide effective mentoring.

If there is indeed a shortage of mentors, mentees that fully buy into the ideals of the mentorship program may become apathetic to the program if a suitable mentor cannot be found, or the quality of mentorship received is deemed inadequate. Therefore the RCAF needs to strongly consider whether they expect the mentorship program to be inclusionary or exclusionary. An inclusionary philosophy might support the objectives of increasing organizational knowledge; but may be less successful in career enhancement and succession planning. An exclusionary philosophy could enable the limited number of mentors to focus on a more targeted group of individuals and provide better mentorship, albeit for fewer mentees. Given the high attrition rates and the need for accelerated knowledge transfer to ensure succession planning, the RCAF may need to instead pursue an exclusionary mentorship program.

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<sup>112</sup> Marc R. Parise, and Monica L. Forret, "Formal mentoring programs: The relationship of program design and support to mentors' perceptions of benefits and costs," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 227, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879107001157-main.pdf>.

## MENTORING IN THE MILITARY PROFESSION

Many military organizations such as the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), Royal Air Force (RAF), US Army, US Air Force (USAF) and US Marine Corps (USMC) have developed mentorship programs to meet organizational objectives.<sup>113</sup> These militaries face a common challenge, how to efficiently develop leaders at every level. Mentoring is seen to be an effective method by which more experienced leaders can pass on their skills and knowledge to the next generation of leaders and assist them in reaching their full potential, both professionally and personally.

Mentorship serves a key role in the development and proliferation of a strong organizational culture and military ethos. By providing insights and context on organizational direction, mentors can enable mentees to think, analyse and synthesize at higher levels thereby better preparing them for increased responsibilities. Of particular importance to the RCAF, in the face of high attrition amongst its senior NCMs and Officers, effective mentorship has been shown to accelerate the development of professional expertise, knowledge and skills. Mentorship has also been shown to increase retention. As an advisor and guide, the mentor can assist the mentee in balancing the pressures and difficulties of the profession against those of their personal responsibilities. In achieving balance, the mentee is not forced to sacrifice one for the other. This section examines how various militaries define and employ mentorship to enhance the profession

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<sup>113</sup> It should be noted that few militaries appear to have formal mentorship programs and even fewer have formal doctrine that governs their program. Whether the absence of formalization indicates a desire to keep mentorship as open and flexible a process as possible, a shortage of resources available to support mentorship programs or that it in the earliest stages of development could not be determined. The programs evaluated in this paper represent the programs that had sufficient structure to evaluate.

of arms to determine is aspects of those programs should be incorporated into the RCAF Mentorship Program.

### **The Royal Canadian Navy and Mentorship**

The RCN does not have a formally structured mentorship program.<sup>114</sup> The subject of mentorship is briefly covered in the RCN's Guide to the Divisional System.<sup>115</sup> The Guide to the Divisional System was issued on the authority of the Commander Maritime Command and is designed to assist RCN personnel in the conduct of personnel management activities. Mentorship, as described in the Guide to the Divisional System, is applicable to Officers and NCMs of the Regular and Reserve Forces and all personnel are expected to prepared and willing to act as mentors.<sup>116</sup> Mentorship is expected to be inclusive and all individuals are expected to benefit from informal mentoring.

Mentorship in the Guide to the Divisional System:

. . . refers to a voluntary relationship that develops between two people, when one of them provides advice and counsel to the other over a period of time. The person providing the advice is the "mentor" while the person receiving the advice is referred to formally as the "protégé", although some people are uncomfortable with this term. Usually the mentor is more senior, has more experience, or is of a higher rank, although this is not always the case. A protégé is usually someone who is more junior in the organization who has demonstrated a strong desire to learn.<sup>117</sup>

The Guide to the Divisional System states that mentors can help mentees 'learn the ropes', prepare them for advancement, suggest strategies for accomplishing objectives, and provide networking contacts. Mentors should serve as role models, counsellors, and advisors for both work and non-work related situations. Supervision is differentiated from mentoring and is

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<sup>114</sup> No evidence of a structured mentorship program could be on the DWAN.

<sup>115</sup> Royal Canadian Navy, The Guide to the Divisional System, (13 June 2001): 1, last accessed 9 August 2014, <http://www.195bicknell.ca/divguide.pdf>.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

described as being related to day-to-day tasks and activities, whereas mentoring focuses on long-term professional and career development. The Guide to the Divisional System does not suggest how mentees find mentors, but states that mentoring relationships normally develop out of mutual respect and that mentees could have several mentors, each advising on a specific issue.<sup>118</sup>

Undesired mentorship behaviours are not detailed, but mentors are not to get involved in performance appraisal as the mentoring relationship creates a conflict of interest.<sup>119</sup> Mentors are expected to be ethical, act as good role models and provide strong leadership. In advising mentees, mentors are to always act in the best interests of both the mentee and the organization. Mentees are advised to act ethically and not seek unfair advantage through their mentoring relationship.<sup>120</sup>

There is no evidence of any formal assessment of RCN mentorship and so its effectiveness cannot be determined. Aside from being defined as a component of leader development, there is no clear link to organizational objectives. There is minimal guidance for prospective mentors and mentees aside from the broad direction for participants to act ethically and professionally. Mentoring in the RCN, as described in the Guide to the Divisional System, is clearly very informal. Aside from the fact that the RCN has a Navy-specific guide that incorporates mentoring, there is little that can be learned from RCN mentorship that is not already included in the RCAF Mentorship Program.

### **The US Army Mentorship Program**

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

All leaders in the US Army have a responsibility to develop their subordinates to the fullest extent possible.<sup>121</sup> They are expected to continuously improve the organization, create a positive organizational climate and prepare their subordinates for greater leadership responsibility and challenges.<sup>122</sup> The US Army believes that counselling, coaching, and mentorship are key leadership functions that will enable the US Army to handle the increasingly dynamic and fluid battlefields of the future.<sup>123</sup> The US Army Regulation on Leadership defines mentorship as:

. . . the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect. The focus of mentorship is voluntary mentoring that extends beyond the scope of chain of command relationships and occurs when a mentor provides the mentee advice and counsel over a period of time. Effective mentorship will positively impact personal and professional development. Assessment, feedback, and guidance are critical within the mentoring relationship and should be valued by the mentee in order for growth and development to occur.<sup>124</sup>

The US Army specifically notes that mentorship transcends the chain of command. This is purposely done to differentiate between normal supervision, coaching and counselling that a subordinate should receive from their immediate supervisor(s) and true mentorship between mentor and mentee. From the US Army's perspective, coaching is a technique to develop specific skills whereas counselling occurs when the leader reviews with the subordinate their demonstrated performance and potential, often in relation to a programmed performance evaluation. Mentorship is specifically seen to be “ . . . a development multiplier that can enhance, accelerate and influence the development of professional expertise, maturity, and conceptual and

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<sup>121</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army Regulation 6-22, *Army Leadership Competent, Confident, and Agile* (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Washington, DC, United States. October 2006): 8-1, <https://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm6-22.pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-10.

<sup>123</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army, Army Regulation 600-100, *Army Leadership* (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Washington, DC, United States. 8 March 2007): 6, [http://www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/r600\\_100.pdf](http://www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/r600_100.pdf)

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

team building skills of its leaders”.<sup>125</sup> The US Army also stresses the longer-term nature of the mentoring relationship whereas coaching and supervision typically only last as long as the pairing between a particular supervisor and subordinate.

Mentorship in the US Army is not a mandated program. It is an informal, voluntary program with the mentee most often initiating a mentoring relationship with the mentor. Mentees are encouraged to develop mentoring relationships outside of their immediate superior-subordinate relationships.

To guide participants through the mentoring process, the US Army has developed its Army Mentorship Handbook.<sup>126</sup> This handbook is written in a simple, straightforward manner in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) type format. The handbook outlines the five essential elements of a successful mentoring relationship: respect, trust, partnership building, realistic expectations and commitment. It answers questions such as why mentees should get involved in mentoring, what mentors do and how to select one and, what are the expectations and responsibilities of participants. The handbook also establishes behaviours that are to be avoided. For instance, mentors are not to bypass or influence the chain of command on behalf of the mentee.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army Regulation 6-22, *Army Leadership Competent, Confident, and Agile* (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Washington, DC, United States, October 2006): 8-14, <https://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm6-22.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army, *Army Mentorship Handbook*, (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Rosslyn, VA, United States, 1 January 2005): 1, <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/mentorship/docs/Army%20Mentorship%20Handbook%202005.pdf>.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

The final section of the guide provides guidance to mentors on interpersonal skills and mentoring techniques as well as direction as to what advice is appropriate. Mentors are encouraged to enable the mentee to develop solutions that best fit their value system.<sup>128</sup> It is believed that by following the guidance provided in the handbook, mentors can focus development efforts to achieve specific professional objectives.<sup>129</sup>

To complement the handbook, the US Army has a website dedicated to the mentorship program.<sup>130</sup> The website provides additional resources such as videos, publications and forums to discuss mentorship. The website also allows mentees to search for prospective mentors through the Army Mentorship Profile Server. Mentees enter personal criteria and that data is matched to mentors that satisfy the criteria.

Lieutenant Colonel Rieberding, in his Strategy Research Project on the Effectiveness of the US Army Mentorship Program, states that the interactive webpage sends a clear message that mentorship is very important to the US Army's culture and has the attention of the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>131</sup> However, in his assessment of the website, Lieutenant Colonel Rieberding discovered that half of the mentee profiles he examined had incorrectly populated the database and concluded that participants did not understand the criteria.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, less than one percent of all eligible Army personnel were making use of the mentor selection tool.<sup>133</sup> Although

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>129</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army Regulation 6-22, *Army Leadership Competent, Confident, and Agile* (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Washington, DC, United States. October 2006): 8-14, <https://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm6-22.pdf>

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/mentorship/default.asp>

<sup>131</sup> Richard J. Nieberding, "Effectiveness of the Army mentorship program" (Strategy Research Project, Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA, 2007): 5, <http://oai.dtic.mil/ADA469007>.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

his report was drafted in 2007, the results are telling. Either mentees and mentors are not aware of the website's existence, or they are not interested in mentoring. It is likely the former and improved communication of the website's existence is required. Clearer description of the criteria used to facilitate mentor selection is also required.

In 2000, then Lieutenant Colonel Bette Washington, assessed the US Army's Mentorship Program in a Strategy Research Project while attending the US Army War College.<sup>134</sup> In her paper, she concluded that the US Army's definition of mentorship was unclear and that the program was exclusionary which violated the US Army's values of fair and equitable treatment of all soldiers.<sup>135</sup> The complete revision of Army Regulation 6-22 in 2013 and development of the Army Mentorship Handbook in 2005 addressed the issue of lack of clarity regarding the definition of mentorship. However, the US Army Mentorship Program continues to be exclusionary. Given that it is a voluntary program, not all leaders will choose to mentor and not all mentees will seek out mentors and hence the program will not be inclusive.

Lieutenant Colonel Washington's apprehension that the mentorship doctrine does not detail any methodology to ensure individuals do not engage in negative mentoring functions such as favouritism, sponsorship and careerism is not addressed in the new doctrine.<sup>136</sup> A 2002 assessment of the US Army's mentorship program cited disconnects between US Army beliefs and practices.<sup>137</sup> Despite revised doctrine, mentors still engaged in negative mentoring functions.

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<sup>134</sup> Bette R. Washington, "Mentorship: An Army Dilemma" (Strategy Research Project, Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA, 2002), <http://oai.dtic.mil>.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Gregg F. Martin, George E. Reed, Ruth B. Collins, and Cortez K. Dial "The road to mentoring: Paved with good intentions," *Army War College Carlisle Barracks: Parameters, Autumn* (2002): 115-127, <http://oai.dtic.mil/ADA490796>.

A mentorship training program to supplement the doctrine and handbook would further educate mentors and mentees on appropriate mentorship behaviours. Unfortunately, mentoring is only briefly covered in the US Army's formal military educational system.<sup>138</sup> Training would help mentors avoid negative mentoring functions and should be incorporated into a mentorship program. One cannot assume that every leader intuitively knows how to mentor.

### The USAF Mentoring Program

Similar to the US Army, the USAF believes that mentoring is an essential tool to developing balanced, professional, and competent leaders with the overall goal of enabling Airmen reach their full potential, thereby enhancing the professionalism of the Air Force.<sup>139</sup> In 2011, Air Force Manual 36-2643 "Air Force Mentoring Program" was created as a supporting document of the Air Force Policy Directive 36-26 "Total Force Development".<sup>140</sup> This established mentoring as a key developmental activity to overall USAF professional development. The USAF Manual on Mentorship defines mentorship as:

... a relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally. This relationship will help achieve mission success and motivate Airmen to achieve their career objectives. Mentoring promotes a climate of inclusion that can help foster and develop the diverse strengths, perspectives, and capabilities of all Airmen. Air Force capabilities and warfighting competencies are enhanced by diversity among its personnel.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Nate Hunsinger, "Growing Company Grade Officers," *Military review*, Sep-Oct (2004): 80, <http://www.peregrine-leadership.us/files/Mentorship-Growing%20Company%20Grade%20Officers.pdf>

<sup>139</sup> Department of Defence, United States Air Force Manual 36-2643, *Air Force Mentoring Program* (United States: Department Of The US Air Force, 1 May 2013): 3, [http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af\\_a1/publication/afman36-2643/afman36-2643.pdf](http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afman36-2643/afman36-2643.pdf).

<sup>140</sup> Department of Defence, United States Air Force Policy Directive 36-26, *Total Force Development*, (United States: Department Of The US Air Force, 27 September 2011): 1, <http://www.ang.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-111108-003.pdf>.

<sup>141</sup> Department of Defence, United States Air Force Manual 36-2643, *Air Force Mentoring Program* (United States: Department Of The US Air Force, 1 May 2013): 3, [http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af\\_a1/publication/afman36-2643/afman36-2643.pdf](http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afman36-2643/afman36-2643.pdf).

Unlike the US Army program, the USAF mentorship program does not appear to be voluntary. Although the Manual does not explicitly state that participation in the program is mandatory, there is an expectation that all Airmen will participate in the mentorship program and that all Air Force leaders will ensure Airmen are provided mentoring opportunities as described in the Manual.<sup>142</sup>

As with the US Army Mentorship Program, the USAF program provides guidance and tools for both mentee and mentor to maximize the mentoring relationship. In addition to the program's objectives, the manual details the benefits to participants and expectations for both mentors and mentees. The manual provides a mentoring checklist to assist the mentor in enabling the mentee to meet their individual goals.

The USAF uses the My Development Plan (MyDP) web-based tool kit to assist mentors and mentees through on-line tools and resources. For instance, the MyDP portal facilitates the selection of mentors or mentees and provides tools for the mentor to assess the mentees' capabilities and build mentoring plans. MyDP also incorporates discussion forums to facilitate communication with peers and more experienced Airmen throughout the USAF. MyDP is designed to be a one-stop shop with links to related USAF Instructions and provides descriptions of various professional development and education courses. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of this tool could not be assessed. A search of the Internet for informal commentary or formal assessments of the website's effectiveness was unsuccessful. It would seem to be an effective tool, but may suffer the same issues as the US Army's web portal.

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

The USAF Mentorship Program is supported by online training courses for both mentors and mentees. These courses are available through the Air Force Portal and include courses such as “Mentoring as a Manager,” “Mentoring Effectively,” and “Mentoring Strategies for the 21st Century”.<sup>143</sup> These courses could not be accessed and so their scope and effectiveness could not be assessed. The availability of mentorship training programs does indicate strong support for the mentoring program.

While the USAF Mentorship Program is designed to help mentees achieve their personal career goals, it provides specific direction to ensure that those goals are aligned with the USAF’s strategic needs. USAF mentors are to ensure that not only are their mentee’s goals achievable, but that mentors ensure mentees, “. . . become skilled in the employment and support of air, space, and cyberspace power so as to meet the security needs of the USA”.<sup>144</sup>

The resources and tools associated with the USAF Mentoring Program are impressive and clearly indicate organizational commitment; however, there are some areas that require improvement.<sup>145</sup> The USAF is clear to state that the mentorship program is not a promotion enhancement program; however, their guidance to potential mentors indicates that they should, “facilitate opportunities for mentees to gain new experiences and build skills”.<sup>146</sup> This sends a

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>145</sup> It should be noted that the author cannot access the USAF’s mentoring portals and so these areas of concern may be addressed therein, but could not be confirmed.

<sup>146</sup> Department of Defence, United States Air Force Manual 36-2643, *Air Force Mentoring Program* (United States: Department Of The US Air Force, 1 May 2013): 3, [http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af\\_a1/publication/afman36-2643/afman36-2643.pdf](http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afman36-2643/afman36-2643.pdf).

mixed message and there is no further guidance for mentors to avoid potential occurrences of nepotism.

Whereas the US Army Handbook on Mentorship amplifies the roles and responsibilities of mentors and describes mentoring behaviours that are to be avoided, the USAF Manual on mentorship does not. The US Army Handbook specifically directs mentors to not intervene on a mentee's behalf whether for particular training or assignments.<sup>147</sup> These responsibilities remain with the mentee's chain of command. Without such guidance in the USAF Mentorship Program, the potential for negative mentoring outcomes is increased. These behaviours may be included in the online training, but topic coverage could not be determined.

Also lacking is any guidance or direction on how to select mentors. The definition only states that a mentor is a, "Wise, trusted, and experienced individual who shares knowledge, experience, and advice with a less experienced person." There is no mention of whether the mentor should be outside the chain of command, or how much more experienced the mentor should be. In a system that is designed to be inclusive there is a high possibility that mentoring will be provided by immediate supervisors. While this will not automatically result in ineffective mentoring relationships, it will make it difficult for mentees to seek advice on how to manage conflict they are experiencing with their direct supervisor.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Department of Defence, U. S. Army, *Army Mentorship Handbook*, (Headquarters: Department of the Army, Rosslyn, VA, United States, 1 January 2005): 18, <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/mentorship/docs/Army%20Mentorship%20Handbook%202005.pdf>.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Another point of note is the desire for the USAF program to be inclusionary vice exclusionary. Here, the USAF attempts to shed the perceptions of elitism that is often associated with mentorship by stating that its program will be inclusionary, implying that mentorship will be available to anyone who desires it. However, this paper has illustrated that due to several factors, mentorship is by nature an exclusionary process. Stating that mentoring will promote a climate of inclusion, and not delivering on that promise, could negatively impact the effectiveness of the program. It is important that a mentorship program not generate false expectations.

Dr Frank C. Budd, the Director of the Organizational Consulting Office at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico carried out a survey to determine the effectiveness of the USAF Mentorship Program.<sup>149</sup> His survey included NCMs, Officers and Civilian employees from various management levels across the Base. This survey revealed that, due to organizational commitments, mentors seldom had the time to provide mentees with structured leadership or performance development.<sup>150</sup> This is likely an issue with all organizations and is not specific to the USAF; however, it underscores the importance of mentors making mentorship a priority. Given the looming knowledge drain, the RCAF must ensure that prospective mentors understand the critical role they will play in bridging that knowledge gap and prioritize their time accordingly.

### **The RAF Mentoring Scheme**

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<sup>149</sup> Frank C. Budd, "Mentoring in the US Air Force: A cornerstone for success through organizational transformation," *Performance Improvement* 46, no. 3 (2007): 17, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/24628081.pdf>

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

The RAF Mentoring Scheme is an informal program that is completely voluntary. While there does not appear to be a formal directive governing the RAF Mentoring Scheme, it is supported by two guidance documents, the Royal Air Force Leadership Centre's Mentoring Scheme Guidance Notes and Mentoring Scheme Handbook. The Royal Air Force Leadership Centre's RAF Mentoring Scheme Guidance Notes provided the following definition of mentorship:

Mentoring is a process where a more experienced person supports another's development outside the normal line management relationship. The mentor offers advice and guidance based on their wisdom, normally during a medium to long-term relationship. Mentors therefore tend to be older and more senior. Effective mentors counsel their mentees on their developmental needs, and allow them to explore their own solutions to the issues they face. In the most productive relationships, the mentor and mentee both learn from each other.<sup>151</sup>

The aim of the RAF Mentoring Scheme is to:

. . . provide a framework to encourage personnel to engage with a personal mentor who, acting independently of reporting officers, can provide support, advice and guidance in personal and professional development. In particular, mentors will help and encourage individuals to assess their own personal and professional requirements, and to plan and succeed in the development of competencies for their career.<sup>152</sup>

Participation in the program is completely voluntary; however, to become a mentor an individual must attend a one-day mentoring workshop. These workshops are provided at the various bases and stations throughout the RAF. While not strictly considered formal training, these workshops are intended to provide mentors with the skills and toolsets required to be effective participants in the program.

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<sup>151</sup> Royal Air Force, Royal Air Force Leadership Centre, "*The RAF Mentoring Scheme Guidance Notes*," 6, last accessed 29 July 2014, [www.raf.mod.uk/rafcms/226094CF\\_5056\\_A318\\_A827702574F0032B.doc](http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafcms/226094CF_5056_A318_A827702574F0032B.doc).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Once the mentor has completed the workshop, they are matched with mentees, normally one or two ranks below that of the mentor. Although not mandatory, typical mentor-mentee matches are made outside the chain of command but within the same branch/trade group (military occupation). The RAF believes it important to match mentees with a mentor best suited to meet their mentoring requirements and notes that the “success of any mentoring relationship depends on a good rapport being built between the mentor and mentee”.<sup>153</sup> This rapport is primarily based on the successful interaction of personalities.<sup>154</sup> The RAF matching scheme contradicts these statements regarding a successful mentor-mentee pairing given that the only two pairing criteria are selection from within the same branch/trade group and rank differential. If the participants’ personalities prove to be incompatible, they are encouraged to terminate the mentoring relationship and select another mentor or mentee.

Similar to the USAF and US Army Mentoring Programs, The RAF’s Mentoring Scheme Handbook guides mentors and mentees in fostering a successful mentoring relationship. The Handbook describes the role of the mentor as providing assistance to the mentee in making well-informed decisions based upon careful consideration of all the options available to the mentee. The Handbook cautions the mentor not to interfere in the mentee’s chain of command or career management so as to avoid perceptions of patronage.<sup>155</sup> It also provides advice on communication, questioning techniques as well as how to provide and receive feedback. Finally, there are a number of mentoring tools provided such as the Mentor’s Preparation Form, Mentoring Partnership Agreement, Record of Mentoring Discussion and an example of Example

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Royal Air Force, Royal Air Force Leadership Centre, “*The RAF Mentoring Scheme Handbook*,” 4, last accessed 29 July 2014, [www.raf.mod.uk/rafcms/1DOD4762\\_5056\\_A318\\_A893527BB2A8C019.doc](http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafcms/1DOD4762_5056_A318_A893527BB2A8C019.doc).

Learning Journal. There is a web-portal that may include additional resources; however, it appears to be under construction and could not be assessed.

### **The United States Marine Corps Mentorship Program (MCMP)**

The MCMP is very different from the mentorship programs of the RAF, RCN, USAF and US Army. First and foremost, the MCMP is a formal program and is *mandatory* for all Marines. Further, the MCMP is designed to follow the chain of command meaning that each leader will mentor their immediate subordinates.<sup>156</sup> This requirement differs from most of the other programs, which encourage mentees to pair with mentors outside of their chain of command and be at least one to two ranks removed.

The MCMP is primarily focused on duty performance.<sup>157</sup> Since mentees are the mentors' direct subordinates, the MCMP does not foster the same type of long-term mentoring relationship as the others. Mentees will be assigned new mentors every time they are transferred to another post.

The USMC definition of mentoring is:

. . . a two-way communication between junior and senior that is positive and forward looking with the ultimate goal of developing the individual Marine. The aim is to strengthen an individual's performance, and by so doing make the unit more capable of achieving its mission.<sup>158</sup>

This definition is very different from the others that have been examined already. The most obvious difference is the mentor's focus on performance to enable the unit to better accomplish its goals. According to the MCMP, the mentor is:

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<sup>156</sup>Department of Defence, US Marine Corps Order 1500.58, *Marine Corps Mentoring Program (MCMP) Guidebook* (United States: Department of the Navy, Washington DC, 13 February 2006): 11, [www.marines.mil/portals/NAVMC%20DIR%20201500.58.pdf](http://www.marines.mil/portals/NAVMC%20DIR%20201500.58.pdf).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

... an experienced role model with a vision. That vision enables the mentor to synthesize the desires of his Marine mentee with the avenues of approach to achieve those desires. The vision is how the mentor can help the Marine mentee reach their professional and personal goals. Ultimately achieving these goals will not only benefit the individual Marine but will also contribute positively to the overall success of the unit.<sup>159</sup>

The MCMP is a truly formal program. Each mentor is to meet with their mentee at least monthly to identify strengths and areas for development using the Honor [sic], Courage, and Commitment (HCC) assessment scheme.<sup>160</sup> The HCC, composed of 33 assessment factors encompasses every aspect of a Marine's life, including:

- a. leads by example
- b. upholds the reputation of the marine corps & acts marine-like at all times (24/7)
- c. maintains high level of emotional stability
- d. maintains high level of physical readiness
- e. obeys all lawful orders and regulations
- f. refuses to participate in inappropriate behaviour despite social pressure on leave/liberty
- g. sharpens common combat skills
- h. provides for support and welfare of family
- i. operates personal motor vehicle responsibly

The mentee self-assesses against all 33 HCC assessment items using provided mentor worksheets. The Mentor then either agrees or disagrees with the mentee's self-assessment by grading the mentee against each item as either effective or needs improvement. While the HCC assessment items are quite comprehensive, they do not explicitly include development factors traditionally associated with mentoring. Instead, the MCMP formally appraises the effectiveness of the mentee's performance, including common combat skills.<sup>161</sup> These worksheets form the basis for the mentor's personal evaluation of the mentee, which runs counter to other military mentoring Programs where mentors are not to interfere with chain of command assessments.

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

Where the mentoring programs of the RAF, US Army and USAF were voluntary and informal, the MCMP is mandatory for all Marines and is highly formalized. The MCMP is so prescriptive that the MCMP Guidebook even includes sample questions that can be used to assess each HCC assessment item as well commonly asked questions about various topics such as buying/renting a home. The MCMP Guidebook truly attempts to cover every aspect of a Marine's life.

In conducting his Masters' Thesis on the effectiveness of the MCMP, Captain Douglass Rauschelbach (USMC) conducted a survey of 600 Marines from the rank of Second Lieutenant through Colonel and including enlisted ranks in leadership positions on their experiences with the MCMP.<sup>162</sup> He collected anonymous responses from 300 respondents. He discovered that approximately 24 percent of respondents did not have an MCMP mentor, which is surprising given that the program is mandatory.<sup>163</sup>

To determine the degree of psychosocial and career support provided by MCMP mentors, respondents answered questions regarding their mentor's influence on their careers and personal lives. Survey responses revealed that 63 percent of respondents found that their MCMP mentors had a positive influence on their careers, but only 53 percent reported that their mentors positively influenced their personal lives.<sup>164</sup> In the MCMP direct supervisors are expected to mentor their subordinates; however, close to 80 percent of respondents stated they would prefer

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<sup>162</sup> Douglass Rauschelbach, "Assessing the Marine Corps Mentorship Program: Planned vs. Actual Use and Perceived Effectiveness," (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA Graduate School Of Business And Public Policy, 2013: 21, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/ADA579957>).

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

someone else besides their immediate supervisor provide their mentoring.<sup>165</sup> Citing a lack of interpersonal comfort, 81 percent of respondents reported that they avoided discussing personal issues with their assigned mentors while 90 percent of respondents with informal mentors reported they were comfortable in discussing almost anything with their mentors.<sup>166</sup> These statistics clearly underscore the importance of interpersonal comfort between participants in a mentoring relationship.

Respondents reported that mentors did not schedule sufficient time to mentor. Many respondents commented that their assigned mentor was ineffective and that their mentors approached mentoring as a task and not as an inherent responsibility of leaders. These respondents stated that mentorship became a check-box exercise, which greatly diminished the program's effectiveness.<sup>167</sup>

By structuring a program that requires leaders to mentor their immediate subordinates, the USMC impedes the development of long-term mentoring relationships that can assist a mentee throughout their career. Because mentors will change mentees every time they are transferred, long-term mentoring relationships cannot develop. The longer-term nature of mentorship is one of its key strengths, as a mentor becomes a trusted advisor that can be relied upon throughout the mentee's career.

### **Lessons Learned from Military Mentorship Programs**

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

This section will summarize the lessons learned from the review of the military mentorship programs and make recommendations for modifications to the RCAF Mentorship Program. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to find formal evaluations of any of the military mentorship programs. Despite mentorship's broad application across many militaries, published evaluations of military mentorship are very rare.<sup>168</sup>

In light of this, it is recommended that the RCAF develop performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of its Mentorship Program. Performance measurement will enable course corrections and modifications to ensure the program remains relevant and continues to achieve the organization's objectives. It is not enough to launch the mentorship program, it must be sustained to ensure continual alignment with organizational objectives and supported by an effective and on-going communication strategy to ensure it is well understood and exploited.

Performance measures need not be complicated. A simple electronic survey can be designed to gauge the effectiveness of the mentorship program. The JCSP and NSP are two programs with 'captive' audiences composed of ideal candidates to complete such a survey. Both of these programs contain RCAF Officers who will have mentored and have themselves been mentored. Similarly for NCMs, the RCAF Academy could conduct similar surveys in its NCM Professional Development curriculum. If such surveys are done every year, or even every couple of years, the RCAF Mentorship Program could be assessed for its application and effectiveness.

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<sup>168</sup> Brad W. Johnson and Gene R. Andersen, "Formal mentoring in the US military: Research evidence, lingering questions, and recommendations," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (2010): 113-126, <http://oai.dtic.mil/ADA519313>.

There are clear similarities and evident differences in the military mentorship programs of the RCAF, RCN, RAF, USMC, US Army and USAF. All but the USMC employ a voluntary, informal program. Within these military programs, the level of structure varies significantly. Whereas the RCAF program currently has very little structure, the USAF and US Army mentorship programs are strongly supported by doctrine and regulations. While too much structure will result in a program such as the MCMP that is so formalized it is prescriptive in its application, the RCAF Mentorship Program requires some additional structure.

Clear links need to be established between the RCAF Mentorship Program and RCAF policy and doctrine. The US Army regulation on leadership clearly establishes mentorship as a leadership method to develop subordinates while the US Army Leadership Field Manual provides specific guidance on mentoring. Similarly, the USAF Manual on the Air Force Mentoring Program is a supporting document to the USAF Policy Directive on Total Force Development. “Runway to Success” states that the RCAF Mentorship Program’s focus is on personal, leadership, professional and career development and is to assist in succession planning. However, there are no established links to policy or programs associated with career development and succession planning. It is recommended that the RCAF develop links between the RCAF Command Orders and other doctrine pertaining to personal and professional development describing mentorship as a key enabler to that doctrine. These links are not intended to develop rigid ties to policy, they simply need to establish a clear link between mentorship and key developmental and organizational strategy.

The RCAF Mentorship program currently has no guidance to facilitate the development of a healthy, productive mentoring relationship. The CAF Mentoring Handbook is a good start, but it is too generic and makes no mention of the dangers of negative mentoring behaviours and outcomes. The RCAF needs to better prepare mentors and mentees for their participation in the mentorship program.

Many of the military mentoring programs discussed within this paper are supported by a handbook that provides mentors and mentees with guidance on how to maximize the effectiveness of the program. In an informal, voluntary mentorship program, a guidance handbook such as the US Army Mentorship Handbook or the RAF Mentoring Scheme Handbook is fundamental to the success of the mentoring program. A handbook can assist mentors and mentees by setting clear expectations as to the objectives of the program. It can also detail the responsibilities of participants as well as offer mentoring techniques and describe appropriate mentoring behaviours to foster beneficial mentoring relationships. The RCAF needs to create an RCAF-specific handbook that provides guidance to both the mentor and mentee as to how they can appropriately accomplish the goals and objectives set out in “Runway to Success” and maximize benefits to the mentee, mentor and RCAF.

The RAF also develops its mentors through training workshops, which can serve to better prepare the mentor for the challenge of mentoring, avoid potential pitfalls and maximize the effectiveness of their mentoring. In addition to their Manual on Mentorship, the USAF provides online training to better prepare mentors and mentees for their respective roles in the mentoring relationship. Development of an RCAF-specific training program represents a more significant

investment than development of a handbook. Training, particularly for mentors is critical to ensure that the RCAF meets its intended objectives with regards to mentorship. Training ensures participants understand their roles and responsibilities and also demonstrates organizational commitment to the mentorship program. Training will be more fully explored in a subsequent section.

## ADDITIONAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

### Mentor Selection

The RCAF Mentorship Program currently lacks guidance for mentees to select mentors. Given the objectives and goals of the program, specifically increased commitment and the leadership and professional development of the mentee, it is paramount that the RCAF spends some time assisting mentees in selecting mentors. Just as not all individuals are cut out to be leaders, not all leaders are suited to be mentors.<sup>169</sup> Given the mentor's crucial role in achieving the aims of the program and the previously discussed negative outcomes associated with a dysfunctional or misguided mentoring relationship, some care in the mentee's selection of prospective mentors is warranted.<sup>170</sup>

From the mentee's perspective, there are several factors related to mentor selection that should be considered when evaluating whether an individual should indeed become a mentor. The first factor, and perhaps the most obvious, is the prospective mentor's willingness to become

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<sup>169</sup> Lisa C. Ehrich, Brian Hansford, and Lee Tennent, "Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature," *Educational administration quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2004): 535, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/518.full.pdf>.

<sup>170</sup> Wanda J. Smith, Jerusalem T. Howard, and K. Vernard Harrington, "Essential formal mentor characteristics and functions in governmental and non-governmental organizations from the program administrator's and the mentor's perspective," *Public Personnel Management* 34, no. 1 (2005): 32, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/16471639.pdf>.

a mentor. Mentors who actively seek out mentorship opportunities will perceive lower personal costs, such as time and effort associated with the program than those that are not interested in becoming mentors. Some individuals might not be interested in giving up the time required to mentor and may judge that a mentoring relationship will decrease their ability to deal with their existing responsibilities and cause a corresponding decrease in personal productivity.<sup>171</sup> At the extreme, these individuals could resent their involvement in the mentorship program and their lack of commitment will seriously undermine its effectiveness.<sup>172</sup>

A second factor that warrants consideration is the interpersonal skills of the prospective mentor. Poor interpersonal skills would clearly have a negative impact on the mentoring relationship.<sup>173</sup> If a mentor is unable to communicate with their mentee, the mentoring relationship will be deficient. While certainly not exhaustive, valuable interpersonal traits for mentors include empathy, an encouraging nature and patience. To be able to assist the mentee in establishing a healthy balance between professional and personal demands, the mentor must be able to empathize with the mentee's circumstances and provide quality guidance. Encouraging the mentee to seek out new challenges or assisting in dealing with existing ones is equally valuable and nurturing. Additionally, mentors should be competent, ethical, good role models

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<sup>171</sup> Tammy D. Allen, and Lillian T. Eby, Relationship effectiveness for mentors: Factors associated with learning and quality," *Journal of Management* 29, no. 4 (2003): 482, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebshost.com/29/4/469.full.pdf>.

<sup>172</sup> Marc R. Parise, and Monica L. Forret, "Formal mentoring programs: The relationship of program design and support to mentors' perceptions of benefits and costs," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 228, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebshost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879107001157-main.pdf>.

<sup>173</sup> Lillian T. Eby, Stacy E. McManus, Shana A. Simon, and Joyce E. A. Russell, "The protégé's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57 (2000): 14, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/13579540.pdf>.

and widely recognized as being a professional.<sup>174</sup> These traits require no additional amplification for leaders in a military context.

An equally critical consideration is the prospective mentors' professional competence or organizational savvy.<sup>175</sup> A mentor's knowledge of the organization is crucial to the mentee's professional development and learning about the organization and their role in it. The mentor's degree of organizational socialization will impact the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that they transfer to the mentee.<sup>176</sup> If the mentor has a comprehensive understanding of the organization, where it is heading and how the mentee fits within the overall strategy, they are in a better position to enhance the mentee's understanding of the organization and develop their political skill and understanding of how to get things done. It is also important that the mentor be aware of the policies, climate and systems in which the mentee functions so that the mentor can provide advice and guidance within those constraints that supports the mentee's advancement and growth.<sup>177</sup>

One final aspect that the mentee, and more importantly the organization, needs to consider is whether the mentor will project the desired values and commitment to the

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<sup>174</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 89, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

<sup>175</sup> Wanda J. Smith, Jerusalem T. Howard, and K. Vernard Harrington, "Essential formal mentor characteristics and functions in governmental and non-governmental organizations from the program administrator's and the mentor's perspective," *Public Personnel Management* 34, no. 1 (2005): 44, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/16471639.pdf>.

<sup>176</sup> Chun-Chi Yang, Changya Hu, Lisa E. Baranik, and Chia-Yu Lin, "Can Protégés be Successfully Socialized Without Socialized Mentors? A Close Look at Mentorship Formality," *Journal of Career Development* 40, no. 5 (2013): 409, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/40/5/408.pdf>.

<sup>177</sup> Zainab Abedin, Ewelina Biskup, Karin Silet, Jane M. Garbutt, Kurt Kroenke, Mitchell D. Feldman, Richard McGee Jr, Michael Fleming, and Harold Alan Pincus, "Deriving competencies for mentors of clinical and translational scholars," *Clinical and translational science* 5, no. 3, (2012): 278, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/76457861.pdf>.

organization onto the mentee. A mentor is likely to project their attitudes on to their mentee and could promote undesired behaviours if they engage in those behaviours themselves.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, it is important that the mentee attempt to gauge, or at least consider, the mentor's degree of organizational commitment, as well whether the mentor is projecting the behaviours, traits and attributes desired by the organization. The mentee may do irreparable damage to their career if they emulate a mentor who promotes behaviours that do not reflect the organization's values and culture.<sup>179</sup>

There are few organizations that are more dependant on a shared culture than the military. It is therefore critical that mentors, who can greatly facilitate the integration of a junior member into that shared culture, be carefully selected. The RCAF needs to help mentees screen potential mentors. Where some prospective mentors will be well known to the mentee through previous interactions, other equally suitable individuals may not be so well known and therefore some guidance as to how to find and select suitable mentors should be developed. A matching tool will assist mentees in finding prospective mentors, but additional guidance needs to be provided to enable mentees to ensure the right match. Guidance on how to "interview" prospective mentors would increase the probability of successful matches. Sample questions will help guide the interview and ensure a successful match.

### Cultural and Gender Considerations

The CAF is becoming progressively diversified and therefore it is becoming increasingly important that the CAF understand the potential impact of culture and gender on the

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<sup>178</sup> Olivier Herrbach, Karim Mignonac, and Nathalie Richebe, "Undesired side effect? The promotion of non-commitment in formal vs. informal mentorship," *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22, no. 07 (2011): 1555, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/60107063.pdf>.

<sup>179</sup> Terri A Scandura, "Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes," *Journal of Management* 24, no. 3, (1998): 456, [www.jcd.sagepub.com](http://www.jcd.sagepub.com).

effectiveness of mentoring relationships. Mentors and mentees making assumptions regarding each other's value system will adversely affect the quality of the mentor-mentee interaction. Research on the influence of race and gender on advancement found that women and minorities have difficulty accessing social and informal networks in their organizations.<sup>180</sup> Given that socialization is a key process by which mentees adopt the fundamental culture, norms and values of an organization, without access to these networks, developing the political knowledge and understanding of how to navigate the organization is made that more difficult.<sup>181</sup> Additionally, women and minority mentees face specific challenges in the workplace and awareness of those challenges will improve the effectiveness of mentorship.

### Cultural Considerations

Given that the cultural make-up of the CAF is a reflection of Canadian society, as goes society, so goes the CAF. Differences in culture introduce differences in values and motivation that should be considered as the RCAF moves forward with its mentorship program. Mentorship strategies will not be universally effective across all cultures. It is important to understand the potential effects that cultural differences can have on perceptions and learning, as both have significant impact on mentorship. A lack of cultural understanding leads to generalizations about what motivates people, how they form relationships, who fills the traditional mentor role as well as the mentee's personal value system.

A sensitive issue that needs to be considered is discrimination. Although the CAF has a zero tolerance policy on discrimination, this in itself will not eliminate discriminatory

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<sup>180</sup> Fred R Blass, Robyn L. Brouer, Pamela L. Perrewé, and Gerald R. Ferris, "Politics Understanding and Networking Ability as a Function of Mentoring The Roles of Gender and Race," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 14, no. 2 (2007): 97, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com>.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

behaviours. There is potential for minorities to experience discrimination during their career. Because of this, members of a minority may have different developmental and career needs.<sup>182</sup> These factors all have significant practical implications for mentors within a culturally diverse environment.<sup>183</sup>

Currently, there may not be enough mentors that fall within the definition of cultural minority to be able to mentor the numbers of cultural minorities that are now entering the RCAF. For the near-term at any rate, there is the potential that consideration of racial and cultural differences may be excluded from the mentoring relationship.<sup>184</sup> Cultural differences could impact the development of the mentor-mentee relationship and a lack of understanding of those differences may even affect the objectives of the mentorship program itself. For instance, the RCAF is based on a hierarchical system where individuals are granted command of others and are essentially in control. It relies on direct and explicit communication for control and execution and expects its members to achieve demanding objectives. The RCAF enables its members to achieve those objectives through personal and professional development and rewards individual achievement of those objectives through promotion.

Essential to personal improvement and continued success is the feedback that is provided through the chain of command. However, different cultures might believe feedback and appraisal

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<sup>182</sup> Janice Witt Smith, Wanda J. Smith, and Steven E. Markham, "Diversity issues in mentoring academic faculty," *Journal of Career Development* 26, no. 4 (2000): 254, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/26/4/251.pdf>.

<sup>183</sup> William A. Gentry, Todd J. Weber, and Golnaz Sadri, "Examining career-related mentoring and managerial performance across cultures: A multilevel analysis," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 243, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi/68911936.pdf>.

<sup>184</sup> Fiona M. Kay, John Hagan, and Patricia Parker, "Principals in practice: The importance of mentorship in the early stages of career development," *Law & Policy* 31, no. 1 (2009): 71, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/.pdf>.

to be judgmental. Further, some cultures may believe direct and explicit communication to be confrontational and prefer indirect and subtle communication.

Whereas advancement in the RCAF is based on hard work, initiative and effective action, other cultures might link that sort of competition with defeat and punishment.<sup>185</sup> There are cultures that value family over all other relationships and so a mentor from outside of the family may not be received as positively. Consequently, a mentor external to the RCAF may not give the mission, vision and objectives of the RCAF any consideration when providing mentorship to their charge. These cultural differences will have an impact on mentoring relationships. Knowing that there are cultural differences and discussing them with the mentee will help the mentor socialize the mentee to the military's shared culture.

Due to the importance that culture can play in a mentoring relationship it will become increasingly advantageous, as the demographics of the RCAF continue to evolve, to have mentors learn about the unique cultural heritage of their mentees.<sup>186</sup> This is particularly important given the fact that there are not enough mentors of the same cultural background to assign to mentees. In a traditional military mentoring relationship it is the mentor's expertise and experience that are most highly valued; however, an understanding of the cultural differences that may impact the quality of that relationship should be pursued.

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<sup>185</sup> William A. Gentry, Todd J. Weber, and Golnaz Sadri, "Examining career-related mentoring and managerial performance across cultures: A multilevel analysis," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 244, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi/68911936.pdf>.

<sup>186</sup> Brad W. Johnson, "The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the practice of mentoring," *Professional psychology: Research and practice* 33, no. 1, (2002): 94, <http://www.indiana.edu/~acoustic/s685/johnson-mentor.pdf>.

## Gender

With approximately 17 percent of CAF membership being women, one can consider women in the CAF to be underrepresented. As a result, there may be unique challenges to a women's career progression because of power and status differential between men and women in a male-dominated 'industry' such as the military<sup>187</sup>. Similar to cultural considerations, one might expect that gender differences to present additional challenges in the development of effective mentoring relationships.

Unfortunately, women occasionally experience the negative influence of stereotypes. For instance a women's success in traditionally male-dominated industries is sometimes attributed to help from others, rather than personal ability.<sup>188</sup> Some women have coped with this stereotype by working far harder than their male counterparts to 'deserve' the same level of success. Studies of the framework of female mentorships discovered that women approach relationships differently from men and as a result conventional mentoring models might not be equally applicable between women and men.<sup>189</sup> Mentors need to be aware of the difficulties that women have faced in the workplace and realize that they may need different support than their male counterparts.

Research has shown that cross-gender mentorship pairings may result in a decreased level of interpersonal comfort between cross-gender mentor-mentee pairings due to differences in the

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<sup>187</sup> Aarti Ramaswami, George F. Dreher, Robert Bretz, and Carolyn Wiethoff, "Gender, mentoring, and career success: The importance of organizational context," *Personnel Psychology* 63, no. 2 (2010): 387, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/j.1744-6570.2010.01174.x.pdf>.

<sup>188</sup> Janice Witt Smith, Wanda J. Smith, and Steven E. Markham, "Diversity issues in mentoring academic faculty," *Journal of Career Development* 26, no. 4 (2000): 254, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/26/4/251.pdf>.

<sup>189</sup> Angela M. Young, Steven Cady, and Marguerite J. Foxon, "Demystifying gender differences in mentoring: Theoretical perspectives and challenges for future research on gender and mentoring," *Human Resource Development Review* 5, no. 2 (2006): 150, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/hrd.sagepub.com/content/148.pdf>.

social identities and shared experiences.<sup>190</sup> Same-gender mentorships may result in better outcomes compared to cross-gender pairings because a woman would better understand the challenges facing a female mentee in the workplace. However, studies of the effects of gender differences on mentoring outcomes are not conclusive.<sup>191</sup>

There are studies that have determined a direct link between gender similarity and interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships<sup>192</sup>. Women mentees who had women mentors reported greater levels of interpersonal comfort in terms of their ability to relate to their mentors, which in turn, facilitated mentoring received. Other researchers found no such differences. Instead, their research found that women mentees with male mentors reported a higher degree of psychosocial support than compared to those who had same-gender mentors.<sup>193</sup> When these results were examined using industrial setting as a discriminator, it was found that in highly competitive industries where women are underrepresented, that female mentee's who have male mentors enjoyed equal or greater success than women who had female mentors.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Rachel Day, and Elizabeth Lentz, "The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships," *Journal of Career Development* 31, no. 3 (2005): 157, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/31/3/155.pdf>.

<sup>191</sup> Rowena Ortiz-Walters, "Mentorship Collaborations: A Longitudinal Examination of the Association with Job Performance and Gender," *Journal of Business & Economic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2009): 31, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/38591586.pdf>

<sup>192</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Rachel Day, and Elizabeth Lentz, "The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships," *Journal of Career Development* 31, no. 3 (2005): 165, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/31/3/155.pdf>.

<sup>193</sup> Ellen A. Ensher, Elisa J. Grant-Vallone, and William D. Marelich, "Effects of perceived attitudinal and demographic similarity on mentees' support and satisfaction gained from their mentoring relationships," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 32, no. 7 (2002): 1421, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/j.1559-1816.2002.tb01444.x.pdf>.

<sup>194</sup> Aarti Ramaswami, George F. Dreher, Robert Bretz, and Carolyn Wiethoff, "Gender, mentoring, and career success: The importance of organizational context," *Personnel Psychology* 63, no. 2 (2010): 391, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/j.1744-6570.2010.01174.x.pdf>.

It is difficult to make any conclusive determinations from these studies since men would typically hold more power in an organization where women are under-represented. The men in these organizations would likely also have greater access to job-related resources and special assignments for their mentees.<sup>195</sup> These conditions are similar to those that exist in the RCAF today. Since men hold more of the higher-ranking positions in the RCAF, not only do they potentially have access to more opportunities, there are simply more of them to act as mentors than women. The literature does illustrate that there is the potential for women with male mentors to receive equal outcomes from mentoring as compared to same gender mentor pairs.

While there are indications that gender and culture may be a potential cause of incompatibility between mentees and mentors, inconsistent findings in the available research make it difficult to determine if there truly is an impact on mentoring outcomes.<sup>196</sup> Fortunately, research exists that indicates that despite mentor-mentee pairs having dissimilar demographics, they can achieve similar levels of positive mentoring outcomes when compared to pairings between individuals with similar demographics. The key to mentorship within diverse groups is to enable mentors and mentees to increase the degree of interpersonal comfort.<sup>197</sup> This can be accomplished by ensuring mentors are at least aware of the challenges that minorities and women currently face in the workplace.

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<sup>195</sup> Rowena Ortiz-Walters, "Mentorship Collaborations: A Longitudinal Examination of the Association with Job Performance and Gender," *Journal of Business & Economic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2009): 32, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/38591586.pdf>

<sup>196</sup> Sarah A Hezlett and Sharon K. Gibson, "Mentoring and human resource development: Where we are and where we need to go," *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 7, no. 4 (2005): 454, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/adh.sagepub.com/content/7/4/446.pdf>.

<sup>197</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Rachel Day, and Elizabeth Lentz, "The role of interpersonal comfort in mentoring relationships," *Journal of Career Development* 31, no. 3 (2005): 166, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/jcd.sagepub.com/content/31/3/155.pdf>.

In an ideal world, there would be a sufficient number of mentors of similar demographics so that cultural and gender factors would be taken into account.<sup>198</sup> Unfortunately, with the current demographics within the RCAF, there is limited mentor availability within specific groups. Until minorities and women achieve representative parity within the RCAF, they will be better served by having mentors who, for the time being, have greater access to opportunities and resources.<sup>199</sup> Instead of attempting to match mentees with mentors based on gender or culture, the RCAF needs to ensure that its mentors are educated so as to understand the challenges and issues, if any, related to their mentee's culture and gender.<sup>200</sup> This will enhance the level of interpersonal comfort among diverse groups and increase the likelihood that they will experience positive and productive mentoring. Effective mentoring across culture and gender will assist the RCAF in attracting and retaining members from those groups. Eventually, those mentees will themselves become mentors and serve as role models to specific demographic groups.

### **Mentor Preparation and Training**

Prospective mentors may have little to no experience upon which to draw to provide effective mentoring themselves. For this reason, training is often cited as a critical component to a successful mentorship program.<sup>201</sup> A lack of training could lead to dysfunctional mentoring despite the best intentions. The mentee and mentor may enjoy a high degree of interpersonal comfort; however without appropriate guidance, the mentorship might fail to meet the mentee's

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<sup>198</sup> Lisa C. Ehrich, Brian Hansford, and Lee Tennent, "Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature," *Educational administration quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2004): 533, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/518.full.pdf>.

<sup>199</sup> Stacy Blake-Beard, Melissa L. Bayne, Faye J. Crosby, and Carol B. Muller, "Matching by race and gender in mentoring relationships: Keeping our eyes on the prize," *Journal of Social Issues* 67, no. 3 (2011): 626, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/j.1540-4560.2011.01717.x.pdf>.

<sup>200</sup> Subha Ramani, Larry Gruppen, and Elizabeth Krajic Kachur, "Twelve tips for developing effective mentors," *Medical teacher* 28, no. 5 (2006): 405, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/22343068.pdf>.

<sup>201</sup> Marc R. Parise, and Monica L. Forret, "Formal mentoring programs: The relationship of program design and support to mentors' perceptions of benefits and costs," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 72, no. 2 (2008): 229, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/1-s2.0-S0001879107001157-main.pdf>.

expectations because the mentor does not know the appropriate advice to give, or how to give it.<sup>202</sup> If the mentor does not have the appropriate skills to mentor, it will create a barrier to effective mentorship.

A training program can provide specific guidelines for prospective mentors as well as mentees. Because there is a very real possibility that prospective mentors had no mentor themselves, and because mentoring is not trained as an explicit professional activity within the current military education system, there is a need for guidance in how to form, structure and manage mentoring relationships. Not only would a formal training program help foster positive mentoring relationships, it will assist the RCAF in promoting constructive mentoring behaviours. Formal training will also educate mentors and mentees on potential negative outcomes so as to prevent potentially destructive mentoring behaviours. An effective training program will also assist both mentors and mentees manage their expectations, improve the overall understanding of the mentoring program and may result in higher commitment to the mentoring relationship.<sup>203</sup> The development and provision of formal training is a significant indicator of the organization's commitment to the mentorship program and will subsequently boost the participant's commitment to the program.

Mentors must have an understanding of differences in demographic characteristics such as culture and gender. While there was no conclusive proof that cultural and gender dissimilarities disadvantaged a mentoring relationship, it was determined that mentors should have at least an understanding of the challenges that mentees from diverse backgrounds face

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<sup>202</sup> Terri A Scandura, "Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes," *Journal of Management* 24, no. 3, (1998): 453, [www.jcd.sagepub.com](http://www.jcd.sagepub.com).

<sup>203</sup> Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, and Elizabeth Lentz, "The relationship between formal mentoring program characteristics and perceived program effectiveness," *Personnel Psychology* 59, no. 1 (2006): 150, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/ebscohost.com/19683024.pdf>.

which may influence the mentoring relationship.<sup>204</sup> An effective training program will assist mentors and mentees develop of a better understanding of the influences that culture and gender have on the relationship.

The importance of mentorship training cannot be overstated. The lack of a sound foundation upon which to base the mentoring relationship can delay the development of an effective mentoring relationship or even stall it at a superficial level. A training program will clearly explain and contextualize the objectives of the program and outline the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and the mentee. Training will help mentors and mentees to set appropriate individual goals and provide strategies to facilitate communication and foster a productive mentoring relationship. Finally, it is critical that the training program discusses both positive and negative outcomes of mentoring and present strategies on how to avoid dysfunctional mentoring. A training program that increases the participant's understanding of the program can only serve to increase the likelihood that the goals of the program are achieved and will demonstrate the organization's commitment to the program.

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<sup>204</sup> Zainab Abedin, Ewelina Biskup, Karin Silet, Jane M. Garbutt, Kurt Kroenke, Mitchell D. Feldman, Richard McGee Jr, Michael Fleming, and Harold Alan Pincus, "Deriving competencies for mentors of clinical and translational scholars," *Clinical and translational science* 5, no. 3, (2012): 277, <https://vpn.rmc.ca/Ebscohost.com/76457861.pdf>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, without much in the way of policy or doctrine, the RCAF program, in its current format, is an informal program. The voluntary aspect of the program suggests that participants are expected to form their own mentor-mentee pairing through their natural interactions. While the literature indicates that informal mentoring relationships yield higher levels of psychosocial support, informal mentorship programs are not directly linked to organizational goals. It is therefore recommended that the RCAF evolve its current structure to a hybrid program that takes advantage of the positive aspects of both informal and formal mentorship models. It is important that the mentorship program has the appropriate structure, support, training and guidance normally associated with a formalized program, combined with a system that mimics the natural mentor mentee relationship forming process associated with informal mentoring.

Clear links between organizational strategy and mentorship, as an enabler to that strategy, must be created. Not only will this help establish the RCAF's demonstrate its commitment to the mentorship program, it will illustrate to that mentorship is a critical process to ensuring the RCAF's future. It is recommended that mentorship be inserted into the RCAF's succession planning policy as well as other related career development policies. Direct links to the RCAF's strategy and objectives will ensure that mentorship provided remains aligned with those objectives.

The RCAF needs to develop a formal mentorship-training program. While most critical for mentors, mentees would likely similarly benefit from formalized training. This training needs to not only clearly outline the goals and objectives of the mentorship program, but contextualize them for the participants as well. Establishing a clear structure for the program will reduce ambiguity regarding its intent. The training plan needs to intentionally prepare prospective mentors for their mentoring role. The RCAF cannot assume that all of its leaders are fully prepared to take on the role of mentor. The experience of these prospective mentors likely runs the full gamut from no previous mentoring experience to having enjoyed an enriching and fulfilling mentoring relationship. However, one cannot assume the mentor's state of preparedness.

Training will also help to ensure that all participants are aligned with the organizational objectives. A full and balanced discussion of the positive and negative outcomes of mentorship along with strategies to not only optimize the mentoring relationship but also avoid the pitfalls associated with the negative outcomes will greatly improve the likelihood that the program will meet expectations. The training program should also incorporate diversity awareness training and guidance or strategies on establishing effective relationships across cultures and gender.

The training program need not be extensive. One proposed delivery method could be a formal workshop with senior mentors, perhaps during a forum such as the Commander's Combined Training Session (CCTS). However, the training does not necessarily need to be classroom based, or in person, it can be effectively delivered through distance learning (DL). In DL format, it can be delivered as part of any number of other leadership related courses.

For NCMs, mentorship training should be incorporated into intermediate and advanced leadership courses such as Primary Leadership Qualification (with a focus on mentees) through to Intermediate and Advanced Leadership Qualification courses where emphasis moves to mentoring functions. For Officers, training should be incorporated into basic officer training, or occupation-specific training. For senior mentors, incorporation into a pre-command course, such as the Joint Command Staff Program (JCSP) or the RCAF's Unit Command Team Orientation Program (RUCTOP) would seem a likely fit. While face-to-face training would seem to make more sense given the personal nature of mentorship itself, all of these proposed courses have DL elements within which mentorship can be incorporated.

The RCAF needs to develop a guidance document to guide mentors and mentees through the mentoring process. This will be particularly important if the RCAF does not invest in formal mentorship training. The handbook will cover all the topics as proposed for the training program, such as the program goals and objectives, but needs to focus on the mentorship process itself. It must provide guidance to mentees on how to seek and select mentors, effective strategies to provide and receive mentoring and advise as to appropriate mentoring behaviours. Other topics should include communication skills and guidance on how to build and foster the mentoring relationship from inception.

The RCAF should consider developing a system to facilitate matching between mentor and mentee. Given the geographic dispersal of the RCAF it would be advantageous to pursue the development or adoption of an existing web-based tool to facilitate this matching. Mentors and mentees populate a relational database by describing their ideologies, leadership styles, work

experiences even hobbies through guided questions. The web-based tool can then provide mentees with a list of prospective mentors with which they can initiate contact. Further research into existing tools would be required as their existence and suitability was outside the scope of this paper. If a suitable web-based matching instrument cannot be found, then mentors and mentees should be provided with maximum input into the matching process so that they feel that they had some control over the creation of the mentoring relationship. Literature indicates that the greater the perceived input into the matching process the more likely a positive mentoring relationship would result.

Finally, the RCAF must develop a performance measurement system for its mentorship program. These measures will gauge the overall effectiveness of the program and can identify areas for improvement. Performance measures need not be complicated, well developed surveys promulgated to the desired audience every year or every couple of years would suffice. Completion of the survey can be incorporated into senior-level professional development programs such as JCSP, NSP or the NCM professional development curriculum. Information taken from the survey will enable the RCAF to make the necessary changes to its mentorship program to ensure it remains aligned with organizations objectives and is truly effective for its participants.

Given that the RCAF Mentorship Program is still in its developmental phase, it is an ideal time to incorporate these recommendations. The research undertaken in performing this study of mentorship to assess the RCAF Mentorship Program clearly demonstrates that there are critical

elements missing from the program in its current format. Following these recommendations will greatly improve the RCAF's Mentorship Program's effectiveness and potential for success.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that mentorship is widely recognized as an effective method for developing mentees with significant benefits to the mentee, mentor and organization. An effective mentorship program will be key to resolving the current demographic challenges the RCAF faces, namely significant attrition of its most experienced personnel. Mentorship will protect corporate memory through knowledge transfer from mentor to mentee, enhance the development of tomorrow's leaders through advice and guidance, while increasing retention and commitment to the organization. Unfortunately the RCAF Mentorship Program in its current format will fall short of fully capitalizing from the benefits of effective mentoring.

The RCAF Mentorship Program lacks the necessary structure to meet its objectives as stated. Currently, there is no link to organizational strategy, or career development doctrine. Mentoring is a key enabler to career development and succession planning and a clear link to this doctrine needs to be established. Links to organizational strategy will help demonstrate the RCAF's commitment to its mentorship program.

The current program incorrectly assumes that all leaders are capable of being mentors. Given that there has never been formal mentorship training, prospective mentors likely have little experience in forming and managing mentoring relationships. An effective training program will encourage constructive mentoring behaviours and prevent potentially destructive mentoring behaviours. Clear direction through training will enable the RCAF to meet its objective of enhancing the mentees' personal career success while avoiding negative mentoring functions

such as sponsorship. It will also enhance the participant's understanding of the program's goals and objectives as well as the roles and responsibilities of the organization, mentor and mentee. A training program will also enhance the participants' understanding of the role that culture and gender may play in the formation and evolution of the mentor relationship.

If the development of a training program is not feasible, an RCAF-specific guidance document or handbook must be developed to supplement "Runway to Success". Although not as effective, the guidance document will serve the same purpose as formal training and will improve the participant's chance of establishing a productive mentoring relationship. The guidance document will advise mentees on how to seek and select mentors, present effective strategies on providing and receiving mentoring and describe appropriate mentoring behaviours.

A mentoring relationship that naturally evolves through interactions between mentor and mentee is preferred. However, lack of exposure of mentees to mentors may hinder the natural formation of mentoring relationships. The RCAF must take steps to facilitate good matches between mentor and mentee. If the RCAF cannot invest in a web-based HR tool to facilitate compatible mentor-mentee pairings, then it should at least provide mentors and mentees with input into the matching process.

Finally, performance measures are required to ensure that the RCAF Mentorship continuously evolves to maximize its effectiveness and benefit to participants. Periodically assessing the health and performance of the mentorship program will ensure that participants derive the maximum benefit from the program. The RCAF Mentorship Program represents a

considerable investment on the part of the RCAF as well as its participants, performance measures will ensure that the investment is worth the resources required to support it.

The practical aim of this paper was to present a balanced view of mentorship with a view to suggesting improvements to the RCAF Mentorship Program. While the potential benefits are significant, a better understanding and acknowledgement of the potential pitfalls associated with mentoring will improve the existing mentorship program. The current iteration of the RCAF mentorship program focuses solely on the positive aspects of the mentoring rather than fully considering the potential outcomes, both positive and negative, that can result. A more formalized program supported by a well-developed training program will help ensure that the RCAF Mentoring Program meets its stated objectives.

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